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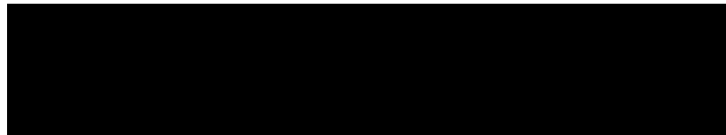
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DIRECTORATE OF
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Intelligence Handbook

Guide To A Viet Cong Province

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ER H 71-1
May 1971

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
May 1971

HANDBOOK

Guide To A Viet Cong Province

Introduction

1. This handbook is intended to provide an understanding of the military and political/administrative apparatus used by the Viet Cong. Most emphasis is given to Viet Cong organization at the province level. The text is keyed to the attached "Composite Viet Cong Provincial Organization" chart. Neither the guide nor the chart describes a specific Viet Cong* province in the south. Therefore, no provincial organization is exactly like the one portrayed, which is a idealized reconstruction of how the Viet Cong view their organization. It is larger, neater, and more complex than normal.

2. The handbook describes how the Communists control their organization, what its components do or attempt to do -- both in Viet Cong and South Vietnamese government (GVN) territory (see the map)-- and how the various elements interact. Given the current state of affairs, the Viet Cong organization in South Vietnam is neither as complex nor as complete as shown in this handbook. The handbook is believed, however, to provide a valuable approximation of Viet Cong organization in previous years and to give some idea of what the organization would look like if Viet Cong fortunes were restored.

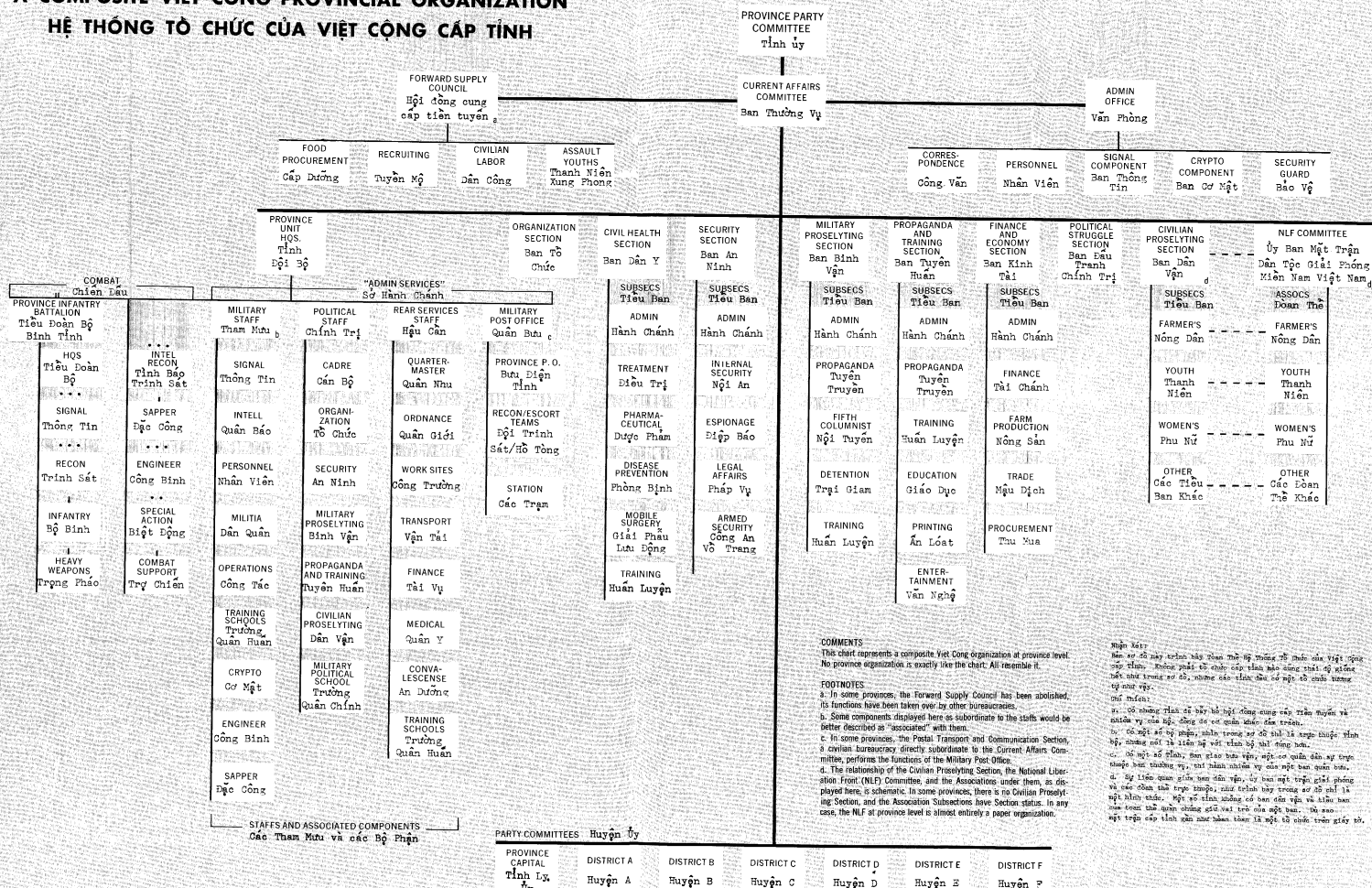
* "Viet Cong" is a contraction of the term Viet Cong-San used by the South Vietnamese in referring to Vietnamese Communists in general, whether they be from the north or from the south. This guide follows South Vietnamese usage.

Note: This handbook was prepared by the Office of Economic Research and coordinated within CIA.

[illegible]

A COMPOSITE VIET CONG PROVINCIAL ORGANIZATION

HỆ THỐNG TỔ CHỨC CỦA VIỆT CỘNG CẤP TỈNH



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I. Background

History

3. The Vietnamese Communists' struggle to gain power in Vietnam began in 1924, when the first party cell was formed. Six years later, in 1930, Ho Chi Minh founded the Indochina Communist Party, the latest version of which is called the Lao Dong or "Workers" Party. Despite setbacks, the Party's fortunes gradually improved in the following decade and a half and by the end of World War II the Party started uprisings throughout the country. It successfully overthrew the weak national government then in nominal control of Vietnam. Ho then declared Vietnam's independence from France and on 2 September 1945 announced the formation of the "Democratic Republic of Vietnam" (DRV) which included all the territory known today as North and South Vietnam. In late 1946, the Communists launched a "War of Resistance" against the French. Captured documents and prisoner interrogations show that the Communists had set up organizations in every province in Vietnam by the late 1940s.

4. The war ended in 1954 with the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu in May and the signing of the Geneva Accords in July. Vietnam was "temporarily" partitioned at about the 17th Parallel.* The Communists took over north of the parallel, installing their government in Hanoi, and the territory to the south remained in non-Communist hands. The Accords stipulated that this arrangement was to stay in effect until the holding of countrywide elections, scheduled for 1956, and that the Communist forces in the south would move north of the parallel, and the non-Communist forces in the north would move to the south.

5. Almost a million refugees -- mostly Catholic (but heavily penetrated with Communist agents) -- went south. Somewhat less than a

* The division is not precisely along the Parallel, but along the Ben Hai River, on each side of which stretches the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ).

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hundred thousand Viet Minh cadres and sympathizers, who came to be called "regroupees," went north. Several thousand other Viet Minh cadres stayed behind in the south, either underground or more openly in areas where Viet Minh influence had been strong in the war against the French.

6. In 1956 the head of the newly formed South Vietnamese government, President Diem, declared that he intended to forgo the elections called for at Geneva, giving the Communists' non-adherence to democratic procedures as his principal reason. After Diem's announcement, the Communist cadres in the south, who had hitherto concentrated on political activity (including terrorism), began to conduct low-level guerrilla warfare. The southern apparatus at this period was headed by Le Duan, now Party First Secretary in Hanoi.

7. In 1959 the Communist Politburo in Hanoi decided to step up its efforts to topple Diem by armed forces and began infiltrating substantial numbers of regroupees into the south in late 1959. A year later, in December 1960, it created the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (NFLSVN, more frequently called the NLF). Although the NLF was billed as a southern-run organization, it was actually a Communist front, subject to day-to-day control from Hanoi. The head of the NLF, Nguyen Huu Tho, was primarily a figurehead, and the real power continued to be vested in the Lao Dong Party.

8. In 1961, Hanoi reestablished the Central Office of South Vietnam (COSVN*) -- an organization which had existed during the earlier war with the French -- as its advance headquarters in the south. COSVN was located in Tay Ninh Province, northwest of Saigon. In December 1961 the "southern" Communist "People's Revolutionary Party" (PRP) was announced as a "vanguard" of the NLF. The announcement was still another device to give the impression that the insurgency in the south was strictly a southern affair. Actually, the PRP was only a new name for the southern branch of the Lao Dong Party.

* "Central Office of South Vietnam" is a mistranslation of a Vietnamese term meaning "Central Office of the Southern Area." The Communists do not recognize South Vietnam as a legitimate government.

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9. During these years, Diem's hold on the countryside became increasingly shaky, and on 1 November 1963 he was overthrown and killed in an internal coup. The ensuing political chaos, as the GVN leadership changed several times during the year, led many observers by late 1964 to believe that the GVN was nearing disintegration. To hasten the expected collapse, Hanoi dispatched the first regimental-sized units of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA),* which arrived in the south in November 1964. The United States, which has had military advisors in Vietnam since 1951, commenced bombing North Vietnam in January 1965 and sent its first contingent of infantry troops to South Vietnam in March.

Communist Theory

10. The Viet Cong espouse most of the tenets of Marxism-Leninism. They see the contest in Vietnam as a "national democratic struggle" with the GVN playing the role of the oppressor which is exploiting the "masses," made up of peasants and laborers. The United States is the "capitalist" and "imperialist" power bent on keeping the status quo in Vietnam by supporting a "puppet" government too weak to hold its own.

11. The Communists' announced goal is to unify the northern and southern halves of Vietnam under a single Communist government. They do not necessarily expect to do so quickly, but state they are confident of prevailing eventually. They view the war as a contest of wills, in which their determination is stronger than the Allies'.

12. The Communists call their struggle to overthrow the South Vietnamese government a People's War.** The phrase is both a propaganda

* NVA, an abbreviation for "North Vietnamese Army," is an Allied term. The Communists call the northern army the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN). This is in line with their belief that Vietnam is one country.

** See People's War, People's Army, written by DRV Minister of Defense Vo Nguyen Giap. The book lays out many of the theories expounded in these paragraphs.

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device, designed to show that the "people" are on the Viet Cong side, and an organizational concept. Following that concept, the Communists try to marshall the energies of as many of the "people" as they can. Thus their organization tends to be pyramidal, with most of their cadres* serving in the villages and hamlets where the people live.

13. These low-level cadres try to recruit large numbers of ordinary persons into a variety of broadly-based organizations. The base of the Communist Army, for example, is the so-called "guerilla-milita," subordinate to the villages and hamlets. In like manner, the backbone of the Viet Cong military intelligence effort is a broadly based informant net, which Communist bureaucrats call "People's Intelligence." Similarly, the mainstay of the Viet Cong security system is a large reporting apparatus, formally tied in with the mass associations of the NLF, which reports untoward activities to Communist authorities. The Viet Cong call the system "People's Security." Virtually everyone in Viet Cong territory is tied into the system.

14. The Communists state that they are fighting their "People's War" on three "fronts," sometimes called military, political, and military proselyting.

15. The military front is largely fought by the Communist Army. It involves all the customary methods of military endeavor: ambushes, assaults, and harassment. It is the muscle behind the political and military proselyting fronts.

16. The political front aims at gaining the allegiance of South Vietnamese people. It relies on persuasion and terror. Persuasion is a function of such organizations as the Propaganda and Training Section and the NLF Associations. Terror is a function of the Viet Cong security service. However, the functions are not mutually exclusive. The NLF Associations also practice terror, and the security service dabbles in persuasion.

* *There is no hard and fast definition for the word "cadre." A good rule of thumb is that a cadre is an assistant squad leader and above in the military, or is his civilian equivalent.*

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17. The goal of the military proselyting front is to undermine from within the morale and effectiveness of the South Vietnamese Army and police, which are the mainstays of the GVN. The military proselytors' primary tool is a large subversive network amidst the GVN military and security structure. The network aids the Communist Army by sabotaging the operations of the GVN Army and police. It helps the political front by eroding the GVN's authority.

18. The Viet Cong have at various times given stress to one or the other of their so-called "fronts" or "prongs" as the situation changes. Thus during the political turmoil of late 1964, Communist strategists considered the political and military proselyting fronts as important as the military front. In 1965, when US troops landed and the Allied military threat correspondingly increased, the Viet Cong shifted to a heavy emphasis on the military front. In 1969, after the announcement of US troop withdrawals, the emphasis began edging back in the direction of the political and military proselyting fronts.

19. Even within this broad framework, the Communists are flexible. For a few weeks in 1966, for example, when Vietnamese city streets were aboil with the Buddhist Struggle movement, the Communists tried to exploit the urban unrest by reinforcing their political arm, and many Viet Cong military cadres joined street demonstrations. Furthermore, Communist tactics vary by locale. In some places, their struggle is almost totally military. In others, it is largely political. One way to tell which of the three "fronts" the Communists are stressing is to watch their experienced cadres; the old hands go where the action is.

Characteristics of Viet Cong Organization

20. The main characteristics of Viet Cong organizations are unity of command, autonomy at the local level, flexibility, self-criticism, secrecy, and high standards of training and experience.

21. Unity of command is achieved through the Party. All high-level Viet Cong officials are Party members, and their primary allegiance is to

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the Party rather than to the bureaucracy they serve. Therefore, an officer in the Communist Army usually is more mindful of his Party status than his military rank. One result of the clear Party pre-eminence is that there is comparatively little bureaucratic infighting in the Viet Cong organization. In each area and echelon, the Party Secretary has absolute authority. What he says goes, unless countermanded by a higher Party functionary.

22. Autonomy at the local level is an organizational attribute which seems to contradict the Viet Cong precept of tight Party control. Although each local Party Secretary is expected to follow overall Party policy, he is actually allowed considerable leeway in its implementation. One reason for the autonomy is the Communists' belief that local chiefs know best what is going on. Another, perhaps more compelling, reason is slow communications. The Viet Cong have a slow, although secure, postal service, and few radios, particularly at levels below the province. This makes it hard for the higher-ups to keep close tabs on their underlings.

23. Flexibility is another organizational precept the Viet Cong value highly. They try to fit their organization to the location and to their current policy. Communist bureaucracies in the highlands, peopled mostly by primitive Montagnards, for example, are less sophisticated than those in the Delta, where most of the population is Vietnamese. Furthermore, Viet Cong agencies expand, contract, and change direction to reflect the latest policy decrees from Hanoi.

24. Self-criticism, to the Communists, is a form of self-discipline. Each cadre is periodically expected to confess his errors before his peers, in so-called *Khiem-tao* sessions. Likewise, Viet Cong bureaucracies are meant to ferret out weaknesses and admit them to higher authorities so that they may be corrected. Periodic reports from lower to higher echelons customarily contain a section labelled "weak points." These sections are supposed to list the subordinates' failings. Although the bureaucrats are not always candid, they are forthright surprisingly often.

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25. Secrecy is important to the Communists to the point of paranoia. All Communist cadres have cover names. (For example, one COSVN-level police official goes by the name of "Chin Cat," or "Nine Cat.") Communist organizations have cover designations. (One of COSVN's cover designations is "R".) Viet Cong bureaucracies are also highly compartmentalized, so that often Communist bureaucrats in one component of an agency have no idea of what is going on in another element of the same agency. Furthermore, Viet Cong headquarters are usually hidden -- in tunnels, swamps, or other remote areas where visitors are infrequent.

26. A high state of training and experience is perhaps the Communist organization's greatest asset. Key officials usually have many years of experience, often in the same province. Even low-level cadres customarily have several months' training in their specialty. Although the level of training is not as good as it once was, it is still remarkably high.

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II. Command and Control

Control from Hanoi

27. In running the Communist organization, Hanoi sees Vietnam as one country but recognizes the obvious difference in conditions prevailing in the northern and southern halves of the country. In the north -- which high-level Communist documents often call the "rear area" -- Hanoi is in full control, and the countryside is peaceful. In the south -- which the documents often call the "front line" -- Hanoi competes with Saigon for the control of the country. The Communists in the south have adjusted their organization accordingly. A revealing reflection of the Communists' view that Vietnam is one country is in their handling of personnel. Northerners and southerners are assigned according to availability and local need, rather than from consideration of where they were born.

28. The Communists' highest decision-making bodies in Vietnam are the Lao Dong Party Central Committee and Politbureau which sit in Hanoi. The Central Committee meets periodically and issues major policy resolutions.* The Politbureau meets more frequently and makes all the important day-to-day policy decisions concerning both halves of the country. The decisions are implemented by the Party departments and by governmental ministries, whose writ runs on both sides of the DMZ.** For the southern half of South Vietnam, however, policy decisions are filtered through COSVN, Hanoi's field headquarters there.

* Resolutions are general -- and often ambiguous -- statements of overall policy -- for example, COSVN Resolution Nine of June 1969. They differ from directives (see paragraphs 38-41), which tend to be more specific.

** At one time, the implementation of some policy decisions appeared to be in the hands of an administrative body called the "Reunification Department" of the Lao Dong Party. This department has received scant mention in recent times and may have lost much of its previous importance.

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29. The Politbureau has 11 overt members. They are a mixture of northerners and southerners. Currently, the most important Politbureau member is the Lao Dong Party First Secretary, Le Duan. Le Duan was born in central Vietnam, in Quang Tri Province, just below the DMZ.

30. The Vietnamese Communist leadership appears to be close-knit. The top leaders, whether northern or southern, have known each other since the 1930s or 1940s. There is a story that many of the leaders were literally in the same boat in August 1945. The boat in question was speeding from an island 60 miles off the South Vietnamese coast. The island was Con Son, then as now a penal colony. The boat's passengers had just got out of the Con Son jail. They have since held a variety of important positions in the Communist hierarchy. One passenger was Le Duan himself. A second is now the President of the DRV, Tan Duc Thang. A third was the current head of COSVN, Pham Hung; a fourth his deputy, Muoi Cuc,* a fifth, Vo Chi Cong, has served as the chief of Viet Cong Region V, which encompasses the top half of South Vietnam.

Command Structure in the South

31. In the south, as the north, the Communists have six layers of command: national, region,** province/subregion, district/city, village, and hamlet. The village and hamlet echelons are often combined.

32. The national echelon in the southern half of South Vietnam is represented by COSVN, which is, in effect, the Central Committee of the Party in the south. COSVN is run by a Current Affairs Committee, headed by Pham Hung, who is also a deputy premier of the DRV and a Lao Dong Politbureau member.

33. The national echelon has several regions under it. COSVN runs Viet Cong Regions II, III, VI, VII, and X. It also directly controls Tay Ninh

* A cover name. Muoi Cuc now runs operations in Cambodia.

** Often this echelon is incorrectly referred to as "military region." The Communists' echelons are layers of Party, not military, control.

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Province and the subregions* north and west of Saigon. Hanoi runs Region V, which includes the highlands,** and the region of Tri-Thien-Hue, south of the DMZ.

34. The regions in turn, control the provinces, of which the southern Communists have 33. Viet Cong provinces are somewhat larger than GVN provinces, of which there are 44. Viet Cong provincial administrative boundaries and names frequently differ from those of the GVN.

35. Viet Cong provinces in turn control subordinate districts and province capitals (organizationally equal to districts), districts control villages, and villages control hamlets.

36. At each layer of command, there is a Viet Cong structure responsible for performing the functions of government, ranging from public health to internal security. At district level and above, the structure is formal, complex, and manned by people who work full-time. In the villages and hamlets, the organization is relatively loose. It is staffed mostly by part-time personnel and seldom has all components found at higher levels.

37. COSVN and other echelons in the south consist primarily of so-called "Sections." An idealized construction of Communist organization at the province level is shown in the chart. The activities and responsibilities of the various components of a province organization are discussed in detail in III, IV, and V, below.

Directives

38. The Communists' principal mean of control is the directive.*** Directives travel from upper

* These subregions are roughly equivalent to provinces.

** The Viet Cong highland provinces of Gia Lai, Kontum, and Dac Lac are part of the so-called "B3 Front," which is a military command independent of Region V. Region V controls the provinces' Party and political affairs, however.

*** Directives, which tend to be fairly specific, differ from resolutions, which are overall statements of policy.

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to lower echelons through two channels. The first is the Party channel, which starts at the Politburo in Hanoi and extends through the Party Current Affairs Committees of the lower echelons. Directives decreeing major policy changes move through the Party channel. As they move downward through Party chain of command, the Party directives become increasingly specific because the Current Affairs Committee at each echelon tailors them for the next lower level. A province with six districts, for example, may send out six different versions of the same decree to take into account local peculiarities.

39. The second command channel is administrative or technical. Each agency or "Section" uses its own administrative channel to control its subordinates. A security directive is an example of an administrative order. Security directives traverse the security chain of command from the Ministry of Public Security in Hanoi to the COSVN, region, province, district, and village Security Sections. Like Party directives, technical directives become increasingly specific as they go down the line.

40. Disputes between the Party and administrative lines of authority are rare. The dearth of conflict stems from an overlap in leadership between the Party and the technical agencies. For example, the heads of the Province Unit and of the province Security Section -- both technical agencies -- usually sit on the Current Affairs Committee, a Party body. Conversely, the Secretary of the Party Current Affairs Committee usually serves as political officer for the Province Unit.

41. The higher echelons use two devices to see whether their orders are being carried out. First, they send senior cadres or teams to inspect the lower echelons. Second, they call lower level cadres upward for consultation, training, and "congresses." Sometimes, when a big policy change is in the offing, large numbers of cadres are brought up the chain of command for "study sessions."

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Methods of Communications

42. In exerting control over subordinates, the Viet Cong have three principal means of communication: couriers, telephones, and radios.

43. Couriers are the most common form of communication. Postal organizations, such as the Military Post Office, and the Postal Transport and Communications Sections, employ large numbers of couriers. In addition, many agencies have their own courier system. Telephones are used locally in base areas, tactically by military signal units, and over long distances by postal and logistical organizations.

44. The Viet Cong's main radio nets are:

a. The Party net, found at district level and above.* (Radio sets are usually located with the Administrative Office of the Current Affairs Committee.)

b. Military Affairs net, found at province level and above.** (Radio sets are located with the Signal Component of Military Staffs, and with tactical units.)

c. Military Intelligence nets, found at province level and above. (Radio sets are located with the Military Intelligence component of the Military Staff.)

d. The Security net, found at province level and above. (Radio sets are usually located with the Administrative Subsection of the local Security Section. Some provincial Security Sections lack radios, but have cryptographers. These send encrypted traffic over other radio nets.)

e. Liberation News net, found at province level and above, for communications with the Liberation News Agency.

* Not all districts are included in the Party radio net.

** On rare occasions, district military units have radios.

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(Radios are usually located with the Propaganda Subsection of the Propaganda and Training Section.)

"Legal" and "Illegal" Cadres

45. Viet Cong local authorities control Communist activities both in their own and in GVN territory. "Legal" cadres who normally operate in GVN territory, possess "legal" GVN papers. "Illegal" cadres, who normally operate in Viet Cong territory, possess no such documentation. The distinction, which appears frequently in Viet Cong documents, is important because a large part of the Viet Cong organization exists in seemingly "pacified" areas. In some instances, well over half the Viet Cong structure serves in areas nominally controlled by the government.

46. Almost every Viet Cong agency maintains some "legal" cadres in GVN territory. The Civil Health Section, for example, needs "legals" to buy medicines in GVN drugstores. The military proselytizing apparatus uses large numbers of "legals" to proselyte GVN soldiers and policemen.

47. In order to maintain their "legal" apparatus, the Viet Cong need a great many GVN documents. The documents include ID cards, residence and birth certificates, and such papers as leave passes and draft deferment vouchers. They obtain these documents by several methods. First, they can forge them. Several Communist bureaucracies, including the Military Intelligence Office and the Security Section, employ their own forgers. Second, the Communists steal documents, either from the GVN issuing office or from the persons to whom they are issued.* Third, they buy papers from appropriate GVN officials, either through middlemen, or directly. Fourth, they obtain them by false defection through a Chieu Hoi center. Or fifth, they simply go into GVN territory and apply for legal papers through regular GVN channels.

* In Tet 1968, Viet Cong cadres collecting ID cards went door to door in parts of Saigon they temporarily held. The number of ID Cards they gathered reached into the thousands.

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48. Viet Cong headquarters are almost invariably in Communist territory. Most officials that staff them are therefore "illegal." The generality that headquarters are in Viet Cong territory holds true not only of the Current Affairs Committees of the different echelons, but also of the front offices of the various bureaucracies. For example, the leadership committee of a provincial Security Section always stays in a place controlled by the Communists. The reason behind the policy is security.

The Party and the Government

49. The Communist Party and its government exist side-by-side. Of the two, the Party is by far the more important. Party members occupy all the important positions of leadership, whether in the so-called "Sections," or in the Viet Cong Army. A soldier who is not a Party member is unlikely to rise above the rank of corporal.

50. Viet Cong personnel records make a clear distinction between a cadre's Party and governmental position. In essence, the cadre serves in parallel structures. Here are two examples of the parallelism:

a. Both a military and a Party structure exist within a province infantry battalion. The battalion military headquarters has subordinate to it a number of companies and platoons; this is the military organization. The battalion also has a Party Committee with subordinate chapters and cells. This is the Party structure. Thus a corporal, for example, can be both a squad leader (military), and a cell leader (Party). In a 300-man battalion, 200 men may be affiliated with the Party, either as full or probationary Party members, or as members of the Party Youth Group. The remaining 100 men have no party affiliation, a fact noted in their personnel jackets.

b. Likewise, a province Security Section, which is a police bureaucracy, contains both a governmental and Party

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structure. The Section has under it a number of Subsections, Components, and Elements. This is the governmental structure. The Section also has a Party Committee with subordinate chapters and cells. This is the Party organization. Within a 100-man Security Section, perhaps 75 men are affiliated with the Party. The remaining 25 are unaffiliated.

51. Becoming a full or "official" Party member is no easy matter. An applicant must first get two full Party members to sponsor him. They vouch for his "quality and background." (The quote is from Party regulations.) His qualifications then get a thorough inspection by the Party chapter or Party committee to which he applies. If accepted, he serves at least nine months on probation. During this time, he is a "probationary Party member." If he proves satisfactory, he then is eligible to become a full Party member. According to Party regulations, applicants must be willing "to accept Party discipline" and be at least 18 years old.

52. Younger persons can apply to the Party Youth Group, which has age limits of from 16 to 25. Like the Party, the group is organized into committees, chapters, and cells. Youth Group discipline is less strict than that of the Party. The Party Youth Group is considered as a prime area in which to spot potential Party members. Persons who have been in the Youth Group find it easier to get into the Party than those who have not. There is also a Party organization for those not old enough to get into the Youth Group. It is called the "Vanguard Youths." The age limit for Vanguard Youths is 12 to 15.

The Current Affairs Committee

53. As already indicated, the most important body at each Communist echelon is the Current Affairs Committee.* Just as the Politbureau exercises overall authority over the Ministries and

* Also translated as Standing Committee, Standing Section, Steering Committee, and Current Affairs Section. The latter term is also commonly used.

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Departments at the national level, the local Party Current Affairs Committee controls the day-to-day activities of the Army and Sections at the lower echelons.

54. At district level and above, a Current Affairs Committee consists of from five to a dozen members. The local Party Secretary heads it, just as First Party Secretary Le Duan heads the Politbureau in Hanoi. The next ranking member is the Deputy Secretary, who is the Party Secretary's understudy. At province level, the rest of the Committee includes the heads of the more important agencies. The chief of the Military Affairs Section -- or Province Unit at province level -- almost invariably sits on the Current Affairs Committee. So does the head of the Security Section. The chiefs of the Civilian Proselyting Section, the Propaganda and Training Section, and the Finance and Economy Sections frequently also sit on it. Except that the Secretary and his deputy always belong, there are no strict rules governing Current Affairs Committee membership.

55. According to Party regulations, the Current Affairs Committee is technically the standing body of a larger group called the Party Committee. At province level, the Party Committee always includes the Party Secretary, his deputy, and almost always the heads of the provincial agencies, the District Party Secretaries, and the Party Secretary of the provincial capital. The Party Committee meets only every year or so, however. According to Party statutes, one of its duties is to "elect" the Party Secretary and the rest of the Current Affairs Committee to do its day-to-day work. The "election" is a foregone conclusion, however, because the Party Secretary decides who sits on the Party Committee in the first place.

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III. Military Organization

Background

56. The Communist Army's main purpose in South Vietnam is to further the interests of the Lao Dong Party. The Army is controlled by the Central Military Party Committee and through it by the DRV Ministry of Defense, both located in Hanoi. The Army has three types of forces: the Main Forces, the Local Forces, and the Guerrilla/Militia. They differ as to subordination.

57. The Main Forces are subordinate to the national and regional echelons. National-level Main Force troops include those under COSVN and those under headquarters north of the DMZ. The Main Forces consist of combat units, including divisions and independent regiments, and large staffs and service formations, manned by many tens of thousands of service troops. Examples of national-level Main Forces are COSVN's Ninth Division and the 559th Transportation Group. The 559th operates the logistics and infiltration system in the southern Laos transportation corridor, and is under the General Directorate of Rear Services of the Ministry of Defense in Hanoi. Region-level Main Forces similarly consist of combat units, including regiments and battalions, and of staff and service formations. In general, the Main Forces are well-armed, uniformed, and organizationally complex. Main Force combat units conduct the Viet Cong's biggest operations.

58. The Local Forces are subordinate to provinces, districts, and cities, including province capitals. Like the Main Forces, the Local Forces have both combat and service components. Examples of Local Force formations are the Kontum Province Infantry battalion, the Phu Cat District company, and the Soc Trang City unit. Local Force combat units usually stay in their own provinces or districts. A province-level Local Force unit is described at length in paragraphs 64 through 127. A District unit is described in paragraphs 238 through 242. A City unit is described in paragraphs 256 through 258.

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59. The Guerrilla/Militia are subordinate to the villages and hamlets. Guerrillas usually operate in platoons, squads, and cells. There are three types: Village Guerrillas, which are full-time and fairly well armed; Hamlet Guerrillas, which are part-time and lightly armed; and Secret Guerrillas, which normally operate in GVN territory in "legal" status.* Guerrillas conduct small-scale military operations and act as the strong arm of the Party at the grass-roots level. The Self-Defense Militia are mostly unarmed and serve as guards and low-level service troops. Both the Guerrillas and the Self-Defense Militia are used as a partly trained manpower pool for the Main and Local Forces. The Guerrilla/Militia are described at greater length in paragraphs 270 through 274.

60. The Main Force, Local Forces, and Guerrilla/Militia are mutually supporting. The Main Forces act as a strategic reserve and "umbrella" for the Local Forces and Guerrilla/Militia. The Local Forces assist the Main Forces in big operations, but also serve as an "umbrella" for the Guerrilla/Militia. The Guerrilla/Militia act as a screen for the Main and Local Forces.

61. Ideally, Communist doctrine calls for the simultaneous growth of all three forces. Actually, soldiers of one force are sometimes transferred to build up the other two. In late 1967, for example, Main and Local Force units preparing for the Tet offensive of early 1968 asked for and got large drafts of guerrillas and militiamen to fill up their ranks.** The Guerrilla/Militia force has yet to recover from the wholesale transfers.

62. The Communist Army's command structure is seemingly complex but actually simple. The military headquarters at each echelon has direct

* That is, Secret Guerrillas usually have "legal" GVN papers.

** Where troops are transferred from lower levels to higher, the process is called "upgrading." When troops are transferred from higher to lower echelons, it is called "downgrading."

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operational control of the soldiers and units at its own level. It has administrative control of the military echelons below it. Thus a Province Unit Headquarters directs the comings and goings of the province infantry battalion as a matter of course. However, it leaves the day-to-day direction of district soldiers and village guerrillas to the district and village headquarters, respectively. The province staffs concern themselves with such matters as deployments, personnel assignments, and logistics on a province-wide basis. They coordinate the activities of the province, province capital, district, and village echelons.

63. From time to time, of course, the province echelon takes over operational control of lower level units. This occurs during large-scale operations or at times when operations involve more than one district -- for example, when the province headquarters decides to attack the province capital, using both province-level and district-level soldiers. Operational control of the district combat units involved would shift from district headquarters to a designated operational commander. Normally, the commander would come from province headquarters.

The Province Unit Headquarters

64. The Province Unit Headquarters, also called the Military Affairs Section, supervises the Local Forces and Guerrilla/Militia within the province. The headquarters serves two masters: the province Party Current Affairs Committee and the Region Military Headquarters. The military chain of command thereafter extends upward through the headquarters of the People's Liberation Army at COSVN (if the province is in the southern half of South Vietnam) to the Ministry of Defense in Hanoi.

65. A Command Committee runs the headquarters. The Committee usually includes:

- a. The Province Unit Chief and his deputy. (The chief also sits on the Party Current Affairs Committee.)

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b. The Province Unit Political Officer (who is ordinarily the province Party Secretary), and the Deputy Political Officer, who heads the Political Staff.

c. The chiefs of the Military and Rear Services Staffs.

d. The chief of the provincial Military Post Office.

e. The chief of the finance component of the Rear Services Staff.

66. The Province Unit Headquarters and its Command Committee, which are military bodies, should not be confused with what is usually translated as "Operations and Coordination Committee" (OCC),* a Party organization. OCCs were created in mid-1965 to strengthen Party control within the military. They are normally headed by the Party Secretary or his deputy, and also include the highest ranking military officers within the Province Unit Structure. Double-hatting between the military "Command Committee" and the Party "Operations and Coordination Committee" is common. Their functions overlap.

67. The Province Unit Headquarters directly controls several combat formations, including one or more provincial infantry battalions, and a number of smaller independent fighting units. It has a Military Staff, Political Staff, and Rear Services Staff, each with associated components. It also runs the Military Post Office. The Allies call Viet Cong soldiers associated with the staffs and the post office "Administrative Service" troops. The Viet Cong have no such term.

Combat Units

68. The battalion is the largest combat unit at province level. Over the years, province battalions have ranged in strength from 150 to

* At COSVN and Region levels, OCCs are called Military Affairs Party Committees.

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500 men. The lower number is currently more typical. The battalion's main function is to conduct offensive operations. It does so independently, with Main Force units, or with district and village troops. The battalion also acts as a mobile reserve for the district units within the province. Led by a battalion commander and his deputy, the battalion usually has the following components:

a. A headquarters, with small staff elements (military, political, and rear service), and a few medics and porters.

b. A signal platoon, with field wire, radio, and courier squads. The platoon communicates with the signal unit of the provincial Military Staff (see paragraph 78).

c. A reconnaissance platoon. The platoon is separate and distinct from the intel-recon platoon directly subordinate to the Province Unit headquarters (see paragraph 70).

d. Three infantry companies. Each company has a headquarters, three rifle platoons, and a heavy weapons platoon (equipped with machineguns and 60-millimeter mortars).

e. A heavy weapons company, with a small headquarters component, a machine-gun platoon, a 75-millimeter recoilless rifle platoon, and an 81-millimeter mortar platoon.

69. Besides an infantry battalion, each Province Unit has several smaller independent combat formations. Their number and size depend on the strength of the Viet Cong within the province and on local needs. Typically, they include an intel-recon platoon, a sapper company, an engineering platoon, a special action squad, and a combat support company.

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70. The intel-recon platoon is a scouting unit. It is supervised closely by the reconnaissance element of the Military Intelligence Component of the Military Staff (see paragraphs 79 and 80). Scouts of intel-recon platoons often carry false papers and recruit low-level agents.

71. The sapper company* specializes in demolition. In attacks on fixed positions, sappers dash ahead of the infantry to breach barbed wire and plant satchel charges on bunkers. Sapper units also blow up bridges, plant mines, and, when broken up into cells, engage in terror and sabotage. Sappers often recruit their own spies and carry false papers. They scout targets personally before attacking them. Almost all sappers belong to the Party or its Youth Group.

72. The Engineering platoon,* like the sapper unit, specializes in explosives and demolition. Unlike the sappers, the engineers build as well as destroy. Their main construction tool is the shovel.

73. The special action squad* conducts commando raids. Its forte is terror, particularly assassination. Members of special action units almost always have false papers.

74. The combat support company is a heavy weapons unit. Typically, it has a machinegun platoon, a recoilless rifle platoon, and an 82-millimeter mortar platoon. Armament varies widely by province.

75. Other combat units under the province echelon may include:

a. Antiaircraft units, ordinarily equipped with heavy machineguns.

b. Underwater-demolition teams, sometimes called "sapper-swimmers."

* "Sappers," "Engineers," and "Special Action" units perform similar functions. Translation problems abound.

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They lurk in areas of Allied shipping, or near river patrol boat bases.

c. Specialized units such as route patrols, tax collection detachments, and armed propaganda teams.

d. Hybrid units, such as "sapper-engineer" units, "sapper-reconnaissance" units, or "special action-sapper units."

The Military Staff

76. The Military Staff plans military operations, keeps track of personnel strengths, and monitors the structure and doings of Viet Cong combat units. It is also charged with training, intelligence, and military communications. Although directly under the Province Unit Headquarters, some of the staff's components (for example, Cryptography and Military Intelligence) are closely controlled by their equivalents at the higher echelons. Other components, such as training schools, are relatively autonomous. The Military Staff also contains Operations, Signal, Military Intelligence, Militia, Personnel, Training, Cryptographic, Engineering, and Sapper components.

77. The Operations Component is charged with keeping the Province Unit Headquarters posted on Allied and Communist activities, with proposing plans and putting them into final form before their delivery to combat units, and with analyzing lessons learned from past battles. The component, usually stationed near the Province Unit commander, has at least six elements:

a. An administrative element, with clerks, runners, and guards.

b. A combat situation element, which analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of Allied and Communist combat forces and monitors what they do.

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c. A planning element, which draws up campaign plans.

d. A force element, which keeps track of the Communist (as against the Allied) order of battle throughout the province.

e. A research element, which receives and studies after-action reports.

f. A map element, which maintains a map library.

78. The Signal Component is responsible for the Province Unit Headquarters' communications. The province signalmen are in contact with the region's military headquarters, and with the province's tactical units, including the Province Infantry Battalion -- via the battalion's signal platoon. Normally the component has three squads: one of runners, one of radiomen, and a third to tend telephone lines within the province headquarters' area.

79. The Military Intelligence Component is charged with obtaining intelligence on military matters within the province. Its technical chain of command goes through the Region Military Intelligence component and the Military Intelligence Office of COSVN to the Research Agency (*Cuc Nghien Cuu*) of the General Staff of the Ministry of Defense in Hanoi. Province military intelligence officials stay in touch with the provincial Security Section (charged with counter-intelligence and counter-espionage) and the Military Proselyting Section (whose fifth column has subversive penetrations in the South Vietnamese armed forces). This component has its own radios and cryptographers.

80. At province level, it normally has at least six elements:

a. A research element (also called the "Enemy Situation" Element), which maintains an order of battle of Allied units (including a description of their

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morale) and keeps a list and description of Allied bases.

b. An espionage element, which recruits agents on Allied bases and in Allied units (but see f, below). Such agents include members of ARVN, the Regional and Popular Forces, and the Peoples Self-Defense Force, as well as policemen and Revolutionary Development cadres.

c. A technical reconnaissance element, which monitors and analyzes Allied coded and plain text radio traffic. When well-developed, the element has small voice intercept, Morse code intercept, and analytical components. Usually, the element has one or more English-speaking members. It can sometimes break low-level Allied codes.

d. A reconnaissance element, which oversees scouting units throughout the province, including the province's independent intel-recon platoon, discussed in paragraph 70.

e. A "technical" element, which provides Viet Cong soldiers and agents with false documentation. Such documentation includes false ID cards, leave and gate passes, draft deferment certificates (for valuable agents in GVN territory), and travel orders. The element also issues scouts false papers for reconnoitering Allied positions.

f. A people's intelligence element, which supervises military informant nets (called "people's intelligence" nets) in the villages and hamlets. At province level, this element is sometimes combined with the agent-handling element discussed in b, above.

81. The Militia Component oversees the organization, training and supply of Guerrillas and

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Self-Defense Militia of the Village and Hamlet Units within the province's jurisdiction. The component's chain of command extends through the Militia offices of the Military Staffs at region and COSVN levels to the Militia Directorate of the General Staff of the Ministry of Defense in Hanoi. The Militia Component has a staff rather than line function, since it does not direct Guerrilla/Militia military operations in the field. Field direction is ordinarily carried out at district, village, and hamlet echelons. At province level the Militia Component of the Military Staff has three elements:

a. A training element (also called "battlefield" element), charged with overseeing the improvement of tactical and technical skills of the Guerrilla/Militia.

b. An organization element, which monitors the structure and size of Guerrilla/Militia units in GVN, Viet Cong, and contested areas within the province.

c. A weapons and combat fortification element, which supervises the manufacture and supply of weapons* as well as the construction of trenches, bunkers, and spoke pits. Well-fortified villages and hamlets are called "combat villages" and "combat hamlets," respectively.

82. Recent captured directives suggest that the Militia component in some areas has risen to the status of a staff. This puts it on the same plane, organizationally, as the Military, Political, and Rear Services Staffs. An upgrading of the Militia component would be in line with a Viet Cong strategy, adopted in early 1969, of emphasizing small unit warfare.

* Village workshops make primitive rifles, repair weapons, reload cartridges, and manufacture mines, booby traps, and grenades. Mines and booby traps cause more than one-fourth of all Allied casualties.

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83. The Personnel Component keeps track of the numbers and whereabouts of soldiers of the Province Unit and its subordinate echelons. Among its concerns are unit strengths, recruitment, and losses. The component forwards strength reports and statistics concerning gains and losses to region headquarters each month and quarter. It receives like reports from subordinate district and city units. Eventually assembled at COSVN and forwarded to the Personnel Directorate of the General Staff of the Ministry of Defense in Hanoi, these reports form the basis for Communist military personnel policy countrywide.

84. The component also handles transfer orders for provincial soldiers below the rank of assistant platoon leader. Transfer orders for higher ranking officers are handled by the Cadre component of the Province Unit Political Staff (see paragraph 90).

85. Training schools also serve under the Military Staff. At province level, they vary by type. Some of the larger provinces, for example, have recruit training centers. Most smaller provinces do not. (Recruits from small provinces are often sent to Region Schools.) Training schools found at province level sometimes include:

- a. Platoon leader training schools
(attended by leading Village Guerrilla cadres, among others).

- b. Squad leader training schools
(frequently attended by Village and Hamlet Guerrilla cadres).

- c. Sapper training schools
(attended by province, district, and village sappers).

86. The Crypto Component decrypts incoming and encrypts outgoing messages for the Province Unit military headquarters. Its personnel are few, well-trained, and tested extensively for political loyalty. All are Party members, with orders to hide the fact they are code clerks. They are also under orders to avoid areas where

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they might get captured and to refrain from befriending outsiders, including radio operators. Higher echelons pass on all personnel assignments of cryptographers. They are trained at COSVN or Region V cryptographic schools in the south, or at similar schools in North Vietnam.

87. The Engineer Component is a small staff element which supervises and plans the training and operations of engineering units throughout the province (see paragraph 72).

88. The Sapper Component, like the engineer component, is a small staff element. The sapper staff plans demolition operations throughout the province, often in cooperation with the military intelligence component. The staff also supervises the organization of sapper units, and plans and oversees their training.

89. Other components sometimes associated with the Military Staff include a Chemical Component, a Political Component, a Base Area Component, and a Guard Component.

The Political Staff

90. The Political Staff of the Province Unit Headquarters promotes Communist political goals within the Viet Cong Army. It contains most of the principal elements of the Viet Cong political structure. The staff is small -- seldom more than 25 persons at province level -- but important. The Province Unit's Deputy Political Officer heads it. He reports directly to the Political Officer, almost invariably the Province Party Secretary himself (see paragraph 40). The Staff includes Cadre, Organization, Security, Military, Proselyting, Propaganda and Training, and Civilian Proselyting components. On occasion, it also runs a military-political school.

91. The Cadre Component follows the affairs of Viet Cong Army officers and non-coms -- including military intelligence personnel -- of the rank of assistant platoon leader and above.* It handles

* One source indicates that the component is concerned with assistant squad leaders and above.

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such matters as their transfer orders, and submits cadre strength reports to higher echelons each month and quarter. It is primarily a military rather than a Party personnel office. (Party personnel matters are handled by the Organization Component, described below.)

92. The Organization Component is the Party personnel office within the Army. It maintains Party personnel records, oversees Party promotions and discipline, and collects Party dues from soldiers who are Party members.

93. The Security Component oversees political security within the Viet Cong Army. It keeps extensive files, spots potential defectors, discourages desertion, and detects Allied spies in the Army. Unlike its political cousin, the province Security Section, discussed in paragraphs 153-162, the Army Security Component does not appear to run agents in the Allied intelligence and security services.

94. The Military Proselyting Component is concerned with undermining the morale and effectiveness of the Allied armed forces. The component encourages Viet Cong soldiers to write letters to relatives serving in the GVN Army and promotes battlefield proselyting by Viet Cong units in the field. Field proselyting includes bombarding leaflets on Allied positions and using loudspeakers. Its propaganda material is distributed widely by political officers of combat units. The component is in close liaison with the Military Proselyting Section under the Current Affairs Committee and handles Allied military prisoners right after their capture. The captives are later transferred to the Detention Subsection Military Proselyting Section, discussed in paragraphs 175-176.

95. The Propaganda and Training Component spreads Communist propaganda throughout the VC Army. It does so by leaflet, brochure, newspaper, and lecture. The component may run the Military/Political School in provinces where there is one. It also conducts "Emulation" campaigns, designed to advertise the exploits of particularly brave or able soldiers.

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96. The Civilian Proselyting Component spreads Communist civilian proselyting policies throughout the military structure.* It also maintains liaison with local Party political cadres, and with the area's Guerrilla/Militia.

97. The Military/Political School, in those provinces where it exists, indoctrinates Viet Cong military cadres. It also seems to give military training. Such schools also exist at the region level and at COSVN. Since military training is also included in the schools' curriculum, its association with the Political Staff may be somewhat misleading. In fact, its subordination is unclear.

The Rear Service Staff

98. The Rear Services Staff and its associated components procure, carry, store, and distribute supplies; manufacture and maintain certain types of munitions and materiel; and care for sick and wounded soldiers. The provincial Rear Services technical chain of command extends through the Rear Services Staff of the Region to that of COSVN (if the province is in the southern half of South Vietnam). Overall direction of logistics is vested in the General Directorate of Rear Services (GDRS) of the Ministry of Defense in Hanoi.

99. A provincial Rear Services command, which controls the Rear Service activities of its subordinate districts, is part of a countrywide logistics system. The system extends through Cambodia, Laos, and North Vietnam. Higher echelon Rear Services commands include:

- a. The 559th Transportation Group, which numbers in the tens of thousands, operates in the southern part of North

* *Village workshops make primitive rifles, repair weapons, reload cartridges, and manufacture mines, booby traps, and grenades. Mines and booby traps cause between one-fourth and one-half of all Allied casualties.*

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Vietnam and in Laos, Cambodia, and the northern half of South Vietnam. The 559th maintains the so-called Ho Chi Minh Trail and is directly subordinate to the General Directorate of Rear Services of Hanoi's Ministry of Defense.

b. Rear Services Groups of the Rear Service Command of Liberation Army Headquarters at COSVN. They operate in South Vietnam within 100 miles or so of Saigon or in Cambodia.

c. Rear Service Groups subordinate to the various Region Headquarters.

d. Rear Service units of the divisions and regiments. Divisions have their own transport and medical battalions; regiments have their own transport and medical companies.

100. At province level, Rear Services Staff work closely with:

a. The provincial Finance and Economy Section. Rear Services levies food and other supply requirements on the Finance and Economy Sections, which supervise the production and acquisition of material in Viet Cong territory.* Rear Services and the Finance and Economy Section also cooperate on money matters. The Finance and Economy Section provides the Army with a good part of its budget (see paragraphs 191-201 concerning the Finance and Economy Section).

b. The Forward Supply Council. The council supplies Rear Services with civilian laborers and Assault Youths.

* Documents make it clear that Rear Services also buys goods in GVN territory.

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The laborers and youths move goods, build bases, cut trails, and carry stretchers (see paragraphs 202-211 concerning the Forward Supply Council).

c. The Military Post Office (or Postal Transport and Communications Section). Rear Services depends on the Post Office to maintain communications corridors. From time to time, mail carriers help Rear Services move goods. Post Office guides often lead supply trains through Viet Cong territory (see paragraphs 121-127 concerning the Post Office).

101. The relationship of the Rear Services, the Finance and Economy Section, the Forward Supply Council, and the Post Office is so complex that it is often difficult to tell where the functions of one leave off and the other begins. Local variations abound.

102. The provincial Rear Services Staff has quartermaster, ordinance, transport, finance, medical, and convalescence components. It also maintains "worksites" and runs training schools. These components have service units which are closely associated with them. The command relationship between the staff components and associated service units is unclear, except that the former normally gives orders to the latter.

103. The Quartermaster Component of Rear Services orders, stores, and distributes food, uniforms, medicine, and like supplies throughout the Viet Cong Army. Although immediately under the province Rear Services Command, the component is supervised by the quartermaster component of Region Rear Services Staff. Thereafter, the technical chain of command runs through COSVN to the Quartermaster Component of the General Directorate of Rear Services of the Ministry of Defense in Hanoi. The province component, in turn, oversees the quartermasters of subordinate districts and villages.

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104. The quartermasters' principal concern is food. Where rice is plentiful, the component obtains most food locally, through Party agencies such as the Farm Production and Procurement Subsections of the Finance and Economy Section, and the Food Procurement Component of the Forward Supply Council. Some rice is obtained by taxation in Viet Cong areas and some on the open market in GVN territory.* Where rice is scarce, the component gets food through regular transport channels of the Liberation Army Rear Services Command. This food is carried from rice-surplus areas in Vietnam or from Cambodia.

105. The Quartermaster Component has the following elements:

- a. An administrative element, with couriers, guards, and clerks.
- b. Production elements, which make certain types of supplies such as uniforms (from locally bought cloth), sandals (from old tires), and knapsacks.
- c. Storekeeper elements which keep records of stores and oversee their distribution.
- d. Depot elements, charged with tending caches of supplies. Ordinarily, such caches are small.

106. The Ordnance Component of Rear Services stores, maintains, distributes, and sometimes manufactures arms and ammunition. It is supervised by the Region Rear Services' Ordnance Component. Ultimate control of Communist munitions is vested in the Ordnance Component of the General Directorate of Rear Services of the Ministry of Defense in Hanoi. The province Ordnance Component supervises ordnance elements of the districts and villages.

* Rice bought on the open market is sometimes procured by bartering with commodities merchants and sometimes by direct purchase at food stalls.

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107. The component is headed by a chief, who has staff assistants for finance, storage, weapons repair, and ballistics. At province level, it ordinarily has four elements.

a. An administrative element, with couriers, clerks, and guards.

b. A repair shop, to repair and maintain small arms and artillery. The element has armorers, blacksmiths, chemists, and carpenters.

c. A production element, to manufacture explosive devices, such as grenades, bangalore torpedoes, and a variety of mines. The element extracts most of its explosives from Allied dud bombs and shells. In some provinces, the weapons repair and production elements are combined.

d. A storage element, to run province-level munitions depots. The element gets most of its weapons and ammunition from higher echelons, such as Region and Front commands. It is charged with supplying ordnance to province and lower-level units, including those of the districts and cities. It keeps records on the ammunition and weapons these echelons have. Its depots are small; each containing only a few tons of munitions. There are several depots in every province.

108. Worksites are repair shops or factories run by Rear Service components. The larger worksites sometimes employ many workers. The Ordnance Component runs arms and munition worksites, which repair weapons, and manufacture mines and booby traps (see paragraph 107). The Quartermaster Component runs uniform or shoe factories (see paragraph 105).

109. The Transport Component of Rear Services moves goods. Although controlled operationally by

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the Province Unit Headquarters, the component is part of the transportation network which extends from North Vietnam to the southern tip of South Vietnam. Thus a box of ammunition going from North Vietnam to a guerrilla unit on a coastal area in Quang Ngai Province would pass through the hands of the 559th Transportation Group (which operates in southern North Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam) and the transport components of Viet Cong Region V, of Quang Ngai Province, and of the district in Quang Ngai in which the guerrilla unit serves.

110. The province component's main job is supervising the civilian laborers and Assault Youths recruited by village Forward Supply Councils. The laborers and youths do not, as a rule, serve at province level permanently. They are forwarded from lower echelons as the need arises.

111. For routine needs, most province transport components also have their own small transport outfits. Some of these are equipped with pack-bicycles, others with Lambrettas or ox-carts, still others -- particularly those in the Delta -- with motorized sampans.

112. The supplies handled by the Transport Component are largely bound for depots run by either the Quartermaster Component (in the case of food, uniforms, etc.) or the Ordnance Component (in the case of munitions).

113. The Finance Component of the Rear Services Staff handles money matters for the Viet Cong provincial military organization. It also oversees the finances of the province's military subordinates at district level and below. The component administers pay and allowances for soldiers, local procurement, and service and support expenses.

114. The component works closely with the Province Finance and Economy Section. The channels by which money passes between the two organizations are unclear. The component periodically audits the books of various offices of the Province Unit Headquarters; submits monthly, quarterly, and annual financial reports to higher echelons; and

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draws up general budget estimates for military expenditures. As noted in paragraph 65, the component's chief usually sits on the Province Unit Command Committee.

115. The Medical Components of the Rear Services Staff are charged with treating sick and wounded Communist soldiers and with preventing the spread of disease in the Viet Cong Army. Provincial medical components are supervised by their regional equivalents. Ultimate control is vested in the Directorate of Military Medicine of the General Directorate of Rear Services of the Ministry of Defense in Hanoi. In turn, the provincial military medical organization oversees and coordinates the activities of the district military medical components. The component also works closely with the provincial Civil Health Section, which accepts its overflow (see paragraph 144).*

116. The provincial military medical components treat province troops for all types of wounds and maladies and accept badly maimed or especially sick soldiers from the districts and villages. The components also care for Assault Youths and civilian laborers hurt or laid ill while working for the Viet Cong Army. At province level, there are more medics than any other type of service soldier (with the possible exception of postmen). Some provinces have several military hospitals or dispensaries.

117. A provincial soldier badly wounded in the field might receive the following attention: first-aid by his company medic, preliminary surgery at a battalion aid station, final surgery by province surgeons, and admission to recovery wards of a province military hospital. If the soldier recovers, he may go to a convalescence center. Thereafter, the soldier would either return to duty or be assigned to a production or administrative post. Some badly maimed soldiers are discharged from the service. Others, particularly in the northern provinces, are sent to North Vietnam.

* In some areas, civilian and military health services have combined.

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118. The medical organization, which varies widely from province to province can include:

a. An administrative element, with medical staff assistants, clerks, couriers, and guards.

b. An evacuation group, which uses Assault Youths and civilian laborers recruited by the Forward Supply Council to carry stretchers.

c. A surgical element.

d. Hospitals for extended care of the badly wounded.

e. A pharmaceutical element, which prepares, stores, and issues drugs. Some medical components manufacture both modern and Oriental medicines. Medicine is also bought in GVN territory.

f. A dental element (rarely).

g. An internal diseases element, responsible for the care of such ailments as malaria and beri-beri, common in VC areas.

h. A training element for training first-aid men and other low-level medics.

i. Medical depots.

119. The Convalescence Component associated with the Rear Services Staff runs centers for soldiers recovering from sickness and wounds. Usually found near hospitals, such components aim not only at improving the soldiers' health, but also at restoring their often flagging spirits. For this reason, the component often has propagandists and indoctrinators as well as nurses. Perhaps because of its strong ideological bent, the component is run by the Political Staff in some areas.

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120. Other components of the Rear Services Staff can include a separate political component, to oversee the political activities of members of Rear Services units, and a food production unit to grow rice or manioc for soldiers in base areas.

The Military Post Office and Postal Transport and Communications Section

121. The Military Post Office delivers Party, military, and personal mail, including letters to North Vietnam. It also carries packages and guides individuals and groups, including supply trains, through Viet Cong territory. It supervises the postmen of the districts and villages and is charged with assigning Letter Box Numbers throughout the province. Letter Box Numbers are like APO numbers and Zip Codes.* In some areas, there are no Military Post Offices, and Postal Transport and Communications Sections act in their stead (see paragraph 127).

122. The Post Office maintains communications-liaison corridors, on which way-stations are located. The way-stations and the routes between them are normally static in VC base areas but change often in contested territory. For security reasons, the Viet Cong also try to set up alternate corridors. The province postal system exchanges mail and material with neighboring postal networks. The networks include those of adjacent provinces, that of the province's senior Region, and those of districts within its jurisdiction. It also maintains contact with transient Main Force military units. The places at which elements of different postal jurisdictions meet are called "entry and exit points," or "contact stations."

123. The number of provincial postmen varies from somewhat less than 100 to over 200.

* Letter Box Numbers, primarily a postal device, differ from Cover Designations, whose main function is to conceal. In 1966 the Allies captured an envelope containing a report addressed to COSVN Security Section. The envelope was addressed to "1418B," then the section's Letter Box Number; the report inside was addressed to "C289," then the Section's Cover Designation.

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124. Correspondence is assigned one of three precedences: ordinary, urgent, and flash. The goods that postmen carry tend to be specialized, such as small or particularly valuable items of equipment. In emergencies, the Post Office also helps carry heavier goods, such as guns and ammunition.

125. The Post Office's escort duties include conducting units and supplies through Viet Cong territory, taking POWs to prison camps, and accompanying visitors, Party functionaries, and other transients on official travel. The Post Office works closely with the Rear Services Staff of the Province Unit Headquarters, with the Province Forward Supply Council, and with Transportation Corridor Sections, where they exist.*

126. The head of the province Military Post Office usually sits on the Province Unit Command Committee. He has a number of staff assistants for liaison with military and civilian bureaucracies. His post office has three main types of components.

a. The main Province Post Office, ordinarily located near the Province Unit Headquarters, which processes the headquarters' incoming and outgoing correspondence. It is manned by postal specialists, clerks, typists, and guards.

b. Stations, located along communications corridors, which keep the corridors up, carry and sort mail, and escort transients. The Stations consist of a chief, and a number of couriers and guards. If they operate in or near GVN territory, the couriers carry false documentation.

c. Recon/Escort teams, which are well-armed, patrol the corridors and guide large or important transient groups.

* They are often found in the highlands.

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127. Postal Transport and Communications Sections, where such sections exist, are directly under the Party Current Affairs Committee. They perform the same functions as the Military Post Office. In the early 1960s, Postal Transport and Communications Sections were far more common than Military Post Offices. Then, in August 1966, a COSVN directive transferred postal affairs to the military. The transfer was never fully carried out, however, and Postal Transport and Communications Sections continue to exist in some provinces. In fact, their number seems to be increasing, which may mean the decree was modified or rescinded.

Lower Echelon Commands

128. As noted earlier, the Province Unit military headquarters administratively controls subordinate district and city units. In turn, District Units supervise Village Units, and Village Units supervise Hamlet Units. Each unit reports not only to its military superior at the next higher echelon, but also to the Party hierarchy at its own level. These lower echelon units are discussed in more detail in Part V.

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IV. The Political/Administrative Sections

Background

129. The Political/Administrative Sections are subordinate at each level to the Party Current Affairs Committee.* "Sections" are usually governmental organs, each with particular bureaucratic concerns. They have two overall functions: first, to govern Viet Cong territory, and second, to destroy the authority of the South Vietnamese Government and Army. The two overall functions encompass a myriad of tasks. The tasks include security, intelligence, propaganda, proselyting, health, recruitment, entertainment, education, political agitation, and terror, as well as routine administrative chores.

130. Each Section has two overseers: the Party Current Affairs Committee at its own echelon, and the related command at the next higher echelon. Thus a provincial Security Section sends copies of its quarterly report both to the province Party Current Affairs Committee and to the region Security Section. The former gets the original, the latter gets the carbon -- a small but revealing indication of the paramount position of the Party. The upward chain of command of the Sections extends through parent sections at the higher echelons in the south to appropriate Ministries and Departments in Hanoi.

131. Each provincial section has a pyramidal command structure beneath it, similar to the command structure of Communist Army (see paragraphs 53-55). The section exercises operational control of components at its own echelon, and administrative control of subordinates at the lower levels. Thus, for example, the province Civil Health Section runs its own dispensaries and coordinates the doings of district-level Civil Health dispensaries. In doing so, it oversees such matters as the procurement and distribution of medicine for the

* The sections are often collectively described as the "infrastructure." "Infrastructure" is a word devised by the US government to describe the non-military portion of the Viet Cong organization. The Communists have no equivalent term.

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districts and the assignment of their medical personnel.

132. Like the Communist Army, the sections include both northerners and southerners in their ranks. Some of the southerners and all of the northerners have come down the Ho Chi Minh Trail. A recent report indicated that some 30,000 "civilian" cadres marched south between 1960 and the end of 1969. The largest number of "civilian" infiltrators are assigned to the Security and Civil Health Sections.

133. Provincial sections normally include the Administrative Office, the Organization Section, the Civil Health Section, the Security Section, the Military Proselyting Section, the Propaganda and Training Section, the Finance and Economy Section, the Forward Supply Council, the Political Struggle Section, and the Civilian Proselyting Section, which runs the mass associations of the National Liberation Front.* Most Viet Cong provinces now also have a so-called "Provisional Revolutionary Government" (PRG) structure which exists side-by-side with the structure described in the following paragraphs. For the time being, the PRG is primarily a paper organization at province level. In the event of a ceasefire or coalition government, the provincial PRG structure may take on substance which it now lacks. PRG bureaucracies already exist in skeleton form at COSVN, with a few full-time cadres actually serving in them.

The Administrative Office

134. The provincial Administrative Office works directly for the Current Affairs Committee, handling its day-to-day correspondence and other routine tasks. The office's organization and the terminology used to describe it vary widely. Nevertheless, captured documents and POW reports suggest it includes Correspondence, Personnel, Signal, Crypto, and Guard Components.

135. The Correspondence Component is a staff and clerical element which prepares reports, directives, circulars, and other memoranda for the signature

* *The NLF is under the complete control of the Party (see discussion in paragraphs 215-219).*

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of Current Affairs Committee members. In US bureaucratic parlance, it would be called the "front office." It includes staff assistants, typists, and file clerks.

136. The Personnel Component, where it exists, keeps files on the personnel strengths of organizations throughout the province. The component presumably keeps in close touch with the Organization Section (see paragraphs 141-142), with the Personnel Component of the Military Staff (see paragraphs 83-84), and with the Administrative subsections of other sections under the Current Affairs Committee.

137. The Signal Component handles Party communications. In one province, it consisted of a signal chief, two couriers, a radioman, and two guards. It maintains radio communications with the Region Current Affairs Committee. Party messages are always encrypted.

138. The Crypto Component decrypts incoming messages and encrypts outgoing messages for the Party Current Affairs Committee. It operates under the conditions of tight security. All its members belong to the Party.

139. The Security Guard guards the Current Affairs Committee and its Administrative Staff. The guard is sometimes platoon-sized and is heavily armed.

140. Other components sometimes associated with the Province Administrative Office include a courier element to carry Front Office memoranda to the provincial bureaucracies and a finance component to monitor province-wide finance.

The Organization Section

141. The Organization Section is the Party personnel office. As such, it keeps records of all Party members serving in the province. The section keeps track of Party organization, maintains records and statistics concerning Party strengths at province through hamlet levels, and makes recommendations to the Current Affairs Committee about Party manpower needs and cadre qualifications. Its records are probably the most

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reliable the Viet Cong possess. As overseer of Party discipline, it prepares efficiency reports and reviews Party personnel assignments, promotions, and awards. A Province Organization Section is so small that it lacks subsections.

142. The provincial Organization Section reports to the province's Current Affairs Committee and to the Region Organization Section. Thence the technical chain of command extends through the COSVN Organization Section to the Organization Department of the Lao Dong Party Central Committee in Hanoi, which supervises Party personnel matters throughout Vietnam. The Province Organization Section supervises the organization components of the province capital, the districts, and the villages.

The Civil Health Section

143. The Civil Health Section is charged with maintaining public health in Viet Cong territory. Subordinate to the Province Party Current Affairs Committee, its technical direction comes from the Region Civil Health Section. Thence, the technical chain of command runs through the COSVN Civil Health Section to the Ministry of Public Health in North Vietnam. The Ministry ordains the Communists' health policy throughout Vietnam and infiltrates medicines and personnel to help supply and staff the southern Civil Health organization.* The Province Civil Health Section supervises the lower level Civil Health agencies.

144. The Civil Health apparatus works closely with the Medical Component of the Rear Service Staff of the Province Unit Headquarters. Since 1965 the Civil Health Section has become increasingly involved in treating and caring for war wounded. The Section takes the overflow of military medical facilities and treats Guerrillas, Self-Defense Militiamen, civilian laborers, and

* Although most health workers, particularly in the lower echelons, are ethnic southerners, a sizable number of ethnic northerners serve with the Health Service at district level and above as doctors, nurses, and other medical specialists.

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Assault Youths injured in the line of duty. At province level, its civil patients tend to be Party cadres or workers. In the villages and hamlets, it also treats ordinary people, providing such amenities as midwife service. Low-level workers are usually trained at the higher echelons.

145. Originally, the organization aimed at ministering to large numbers of people. Perforce, it emphasized simple remedies and has striven to train great numbers of low-level health workers. Because of the war, however, it has had to cut back on its public health services to help military hospitals cope with Army casualties. In some areas, the Civil Health Section and the Medical Component of the military's Rear Service command have combined.

146. The organization of Civil Health Services varies province by province. A composite provincial section -- led by a command committee -- might include administrative, treatment, pharmaceutical, disease preventions, mobile surgery, and training subsections.

147. The Administrative Subsection takes care of the section's routine administrative matters, including finance, and personnel. It includes clerks, guards, and couriers.

148. The Treatment Subsection runs one or more provincial Civil Health dispensaries. The dispensaries, usually run by a doctor (often a northerner), are manned by nurses and lesser medical personnel. They can range in size from 30 to 100 beds.

149. The Pharmaceutical Subsection (also called "Drug Subsection") stores, prepares, and dispenses drugs. The subsections has three sources of drugs: those manufactured locally (particularly Oriental medicines), those smuggled into South Vietnam (often Communist-supplied), and those bought in pharmacies and drug supply companies in GVN territory. Health service buyers are often equipped with false papers. The subsection maintains small medical depots whose whereabouts are known to only a few of its members. The depots supply the other provincial Civil Health subsections and the lower

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level health agencies. The subsection is manned by pharmacists and pharmacists' helpers.

150. The Disease Prevention Subsection sends teams throughout the province to advise lower echelons on basic health procedures. Sanitation, hygiene, and midwifery are among its concerns.

151. A Mobile Surgery Subsection, where it exists, consists of a doctor and a few assistants who travel about the province performing operations on badly wounded Party workers, guerrillas, or deserving civilians. Mobile surgery teams are becoming increasingly rare.

152. The Training Subsection schools midwives, first-aid technicians, and apprentice nurses. Civil Health training centers are also located at region and COSVN levels. Doctors or highly specialized medical personnel are often graduates of schools in the north, run by North Vietnam's Ministry of Public Health. Thousands of Civil Health workers have infiltrated down the Ho Chi Minh Trail from the north.

Security Section

153. The Security Section at province level is charged with internal security and counterintelligence.* It keeps higher levels informed concerning security matters; snoops on provincial bureaucrats; runs security investigations in VC-controlled areas; trains hamlet, village, and district security cadres; and spies on Allied security and intelligence organizations and on the GVN police, particularly in the province capital. In the event of a ceasefire, it will probably become one of the Communists' most active organizations.

154. The section is subordinate to the province Current Affairs Committee and to the Region Security Section. Both receive its monthly, quarterly, semi-annual, and annual reports. A province Security Section has a direct radio link with the Ministry of Public Security (MPS) in Hanoi, which controls the Communist security apparatus north

* *The Security Section closely resembles the KGB, which is the Soviet Union's police organization.*

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and south of the 17th Parallel. The province section supervises the Security Sections of the districts and villages as well as of the province capital.

155. Security Section personnel are both recruited locally and infiltrated from North Vietnam. Security infiltrators have been marching down the Ho Chi Minh Trail since 1961. The infiltrators, all of whom have gone through MPS training schools prior to their departure from the north, are almost always cadres and specialists.* They include agent handlers, code clerks, interrogators, and administrators. There is also a Security Service training school at COSVN, which cranks out about a thousand southern graduates a year.

156. The Province Section is run by a Leadership Committee. The committee (also called "Command" or "Steering" Committee) is composed of the Security Section Chief, his deputy, and representatives (usually the heads) of the subordinate subsections. The section chief, almost invariably a cadre of several years' experience, is often a graduate of the MPS school at Ha Dong, outside Hanoi. The chief closely controls the subsections and coordinates the provincial subsections' activities with those of the district services. At the province level, the Security Section normally has administrative, internal security, espionage, legal affairs, and armed security subsections.

157. The Administrative Subsection (also called the "Office Staff" or "Administrative Office") works for the Leadership Committee, providing physical protection and administrative support. It performs such chores as typing, keeping personnel records, and balancing the financial books. The subsection also has guards to protect the Leadership Committee, a code clerk, and a training cadre who arranges for the training courses given to district and village police. Provincial training courses usually last from four to six weeks. The subsection also makes up false papers for security cadres in GVN territory.

* For example, the head of the COSVN Security was once the deputy chief of the Ministry of Public Security in Hanoi.

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158. The Internal Security Subsection (also translated as the "Political," the "Political Security," the "Security Guard," and the "Political Protection" Subsection) is charged with internal security in Viet Cong-controlled territory. The subsection is headed by a chief, helped by a deputy, and contains a researcher and some couriers. It has three main components:

- a. An element charged with running investigations in VC areas to detect Allied spies, informants, and sympathizers. The element supervises "People's Security" nets run in Viet Cong territory by the districts and villages.
- b. An element charged with ferreting out doubters in the provincial bureaucracies.
- c. An "armed reconnaissance" element responsible for countering Allied commando formations aimed at the Communists' political/administrative structures. It is defensively oriented. GVN Provincial Reconnaissance Units are its typical targets.

159. The Espionage Subsection works mostly in government-controlled areas. It spies on Allied intelligence and security components, recruits agents in South Vietnamese political parties, religious groups, and labor unions; kidnaps or kills Vietnamese policemen and intelligence functionaries; and draws up blacklists of government sympathizers and officials. Most of the subsection's cadres work in the province capital, either on their own or with the capital's own security cadres.

160. The subsection is run by a chief and his deputy, who are supported by researchers, couriers, and guards. It has three main components:

- a. An Intelligence Component -- often codenamed "A1" -- charged with spying on Allied intelligence and security agencies and on South Vietnamese political parties, religious groups, and labor unions. It uses persuasion, bribery, and threats to recruit

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agents. According to a captured document, it also tries to take advantage of "dissensions between the Americans and their Vietnamese henchmen." The component sometimes selects "reliable" families from VC areas who have relatives working for the South Vietnamese police. It sends the families to government areas "to persuade or embroil their relatives with the Revolution." The component's top targets include cryptographers in Allied security and intelligence organizations and Vietnamese interpreters working for US security and intelligence components. Other targets include the National Police (particularly its Special Branch), the ARVN Military Security Service, and ARVN and MACV intelligence officials.

b. A "secret security" component -- often codenamed "A2" -- which has a spotting function in government areas. It helps the Intelligence Component by spotting potential spies. It also draws up blacklists for use by VC assassins and other cadres in GVN territory. (For example, in Hue during Tet 1968, the Communists killed large numbers of government administrators and sympathizers; many of whose names appeared on blacklists prepared by the local security component.)

c. An "Armed Reconnaissance" Component -- often codenamed "A3" -- charged with arresting or killing Security Component targets in government-controlled areas, with capturing documents, and with sabotaging Allied intelligence or security installations. Its main targets are the GVN police, police agents and informants, pacification cadres, and "reactionary Party leaders." During Tet 1968 a security element "armed reconnaissance" team in Saigon was assigned to kill the US Ambassador. It failed.

161. The Legal Affairs Component* keeps order in VC-controlled areas and holds suspects and

** The Legal Affairs Component is frequently divided into two or more subsections. For example, its interrogation element and jail sometimes have subsection status.*

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captives for interrogation and maintains the Communists' political prisons. Its members are roughly equivalent to the South Vietnamese uniformed police. At province level the Legal Affairs apparatus usually has at least four elements:

a. An administrative element, with one or two couriers (to carry messages to the Security Section chief or to district jails), a typist (to type interrogation reports), and one or two guards.

b. An interrogation element, with interrogators and guards. The element usually has its own small lockup, separate from the regular province jail.

c. A jail, for putting away political prisoners, suspected Allied spies, and captured Allied police, security, or intelligence officials. Security Section jails differ from those run by the Military Proselyting Section, which are for military captives. (But note that military intelligence prisoners go to security jails.)

d. "Public order element,"* which has jurisdiction over offenses such as murder, rape, fraud, or theft of public funds.

162. The Armed Security Forces (ASF) are quasi-military units of armed police. They are roughly similar to the GVN's National Police Field Forces. The ASF in the south are the southern extension of the Armed Public Security Forces of North Vietnam,** run by Hanoi's Ministry of Public Security. Many ASF units were formed in the south in 1967 to take part in the Tet campaign of 1968. Organized into companies, platoons, and squads, they have both offensive and defensive roles. Their offensive role is to accompany Viet Cong military units into

* In most areas, the public order element probably has now joined the Armed Security Forces.

** The Armed Public Security Forces in the north are primarily defensive. Their duties north of the DMZ include border defense.

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GVN territory. Armed with blacklists and tommy guns, they are tasked with rounding up GVN officials and sympathizers. Their defensive role is to protect Party agencies from Allied anti-"infrastructure," such as those run under the Phoenix program. The normal size of an ASF unit at province level is a reinforced platoon.*

Military Proselyting Section

163. The aim of the Military Proselyting Section is to undermine the morale and effectiveness of the GVN Army and police. The provincial section reports to the provincial Current Affairs Committee and to the Military Proselyting Section at the Region level. Ultimate direction of the Communists' military proselyting effort in the south is vested in the Military and Enemy Proselyting Directorate of the Political Staff of the Ministry of Defense in Hanoi. The province Military Proselyting Section supervises the military proselyting efforts of the subordinate levels. The Communists, who say they are fighting the war on three fronts -- military, political, and military proselyting -- consider the section one of their most important.

164. The Military Proselyting Section works closely with the provincial Security Section, with the Military Intelligence Component of the Military Staff of the Province Unit Headquarters, and with the Military Proselyting Component of the Political Staff of the Province Unit Headquarters. These organizations trade information, prisoners, and agents.** COSVN and Hanoi sometimes pass plaintext messages concerning military proselyting over Liberation Radio.

165. Although the military proselytors' main target is the South Vietnamese, they also try to appeal to other Free World forces. In areas where

* Captured Viet Cong directives calls for an ASF battalion in each region, a company in each province, and a platoon in each district. These decrees are seldom met. An ASF Regiment, the 180th, is attached to COSVN.

** In some provinces, representatives of the organizations belong to a body called the "Military Proselyting Council," which meets periodically to discuss matters of mutual concern.

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Koreans operate, for example, the proselytors have a Korean component. Like components exist in territory where Americans, Thais, and Filipinos operate. The proselyting organization aimed at foreign soldiers, including Americans, is sometimes called an "Enemy" rather than "Military Proselyting" Section. It occasionally has separate section status.

166. The section is run by a chief and his deputy. Normally both have been trained either at COSVN or at the Enemy and Military Proselyting Directorate of the General Political Directorate of the Defense Ministry in Hanoi.* At province level, the section usually has at least five subsections: Administrative, Propaganda, Fifth Columnist, Detention, and Training.

167. The Administrative Subsection handles clerical, security, financial, and personnel matters. It works closely with the Military Proselyting Chief and guards him. The subsection ordinarily has a small courier element, which carries the section's mail.

168. The Propaganda Subsection devises and distributes propaganda for GVN soldiers, police, and their dependents. The subsection also supervises the large-scale face-to-face propaganda campaigns run by the districts and villages. Propaganda appeals to GVN soldiers are most often patriotic and anti-American. Those aimed at American soldiers are often tailored along racial or ethnic lines (Negroes, Hawaiians of Oriental extraction, Puerto Rican, etc.). On occasion, the subsection sends armed propaganda teams into government areas.

169. The Fifth Columnist Subsection runs agents in ARVN, the National Police, the Revolutionary Development organization, and the Regional, Popular, and People's Self-Defense Forces.** The agents'

* The Proselyting Directorate has sent several hundred cadres to the south over the Ho Chi Minh Trail. One group the Directorate reportedly dispatched was a "battalion" of women to proselyte Allied soldiers in the cities.

** The list is not all-inclusive. Virtually all GVN officials qualify as targets for recruitment.

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main task is subversion rather than espionage, which is a secondary concern. The subversive endeavors include attempts to foment rebellion of units or posts; to aid from the inside armed attackers from without; to kill loyal officials; to sabotage GVN equipment and files; to induce desertions and defections; to encourage shirking and malingering; to steal arms and ammunitions; to sow discord by spreading rumors; and to set up arrangements whereby GVN soldiers or units sit out the war.

170. The military proselytors have two types of agents on their rolls: Fifth Columnists and Sympathizers. They differ only in the degree the Viet Cong trust them. Fifth Columnists are considered relatively trustworthy; Sympathizers less so.

171. The military proselytors' Fifth Column has three ways to place agents.

a. To send them into GVN ranks from the outside. Such agents first obtain legal GVN papers. A common method of doing so is by false defection through the Chieu Hoi program. Many infiltrated agents are Party members.

b. To recruit them in place. The Viet Cong approach potential agents in GVN ranks either directly or indirectly. Direct approaches are made by military proselyting cadres or through the mails. Indirect approaches are made through the targets' relations or friends. Using these techniques, the Communist military proselytors have contacted most GVN soldiers and functionaries at least once a year. Many are contacted several times.

c. To convert South Vietnamese POWs in military proselyting prisons and send them back to GVN ranks as agents. The Communist prison system is geared to promote conversions.

172. Agents are handled both directly by military proselyting case officers or indirectly through "cutouts." Typically, the cutouts are

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members of the agent's family, such as his wife or mother. For safety's sake, the Viet Cong prefer to run agents indirectly. They favor women as cutouts because they think them less conspicuous.

173. A captured document has indicated that a provincial Fifth Columnist Subsection, which includes researchers and couriers at province level, has three main elements:

a. An urban element, presumably concerned with recruiting and handling agents in GVN units in the cities.

b. A rural element, presumably concerned with recruiting and handling agents in the GVN units in the countryside -- for example, People's Self-Defense Forces.

c. An "enemy installation" element, presumably concerned with recruiting and running agents on Allied military bases.

174. The Viet Cong military proselyters' organization maintains large numbers of persons, mostly women, in GVN territory to support the agent network. Normally they possess GVN documentation allowing them to operate "legally."

175. The Detention Subsection runs Viet Cong prisoner of war camps. The principal aim in holding prisoners is to convert them to the Viet Cong cause. The subsection eventually lets loose most Vietnamese captives.* Some are recruited into the Viet Cong Army, some are turned around and sent to rejoin their RVNAF units as Fifth Columnists or spies, and some are allowed to go home. Other Viet Cong detainees, on their release, rejoin their units without having become Fifth Columnists. When this is the case, Viet Cong proselyters usually approach them on their return.

176. The military proselyting/prisons have three main elements:

* US POWs are released only on rare occasions, usually with a blare of publicity.

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a. An administrative element to oversee finances, keep prison records, and feed and clothe the captives.

b. An indoctrination/propaganda element to effect conversions.

c. Some guards.

177. The Training Subsection, where it exists at province level, gives courses to military proselyting cadres of hamlet level and above. Province-level courses include instruction on propaganda and on the running of prison camps. Whether provinces give training courses on running agents is unclear. Such courses exist at the region level, at COSVN, and in North Vietnam. In the north, they are held at schools run by the Military and Enemy Proselyting Directorate of the Political Staff of the Ministry of Defense.

The Propaganda and Training Section

178. The Propaganda and Training Section (sometimes called the Propaganda, Culture, and Indoctrination Section) is charged with indoctrinating both Party members and the "masses." It does so by word-of-mouth, by publications, and by radio. The section also runs the Viet Cong school system and supervises entertainment and the arts in Communist territory. The province section reports to the provincial Current Affairs Committee and to the Regional Propaganda and Training Section. Region Sections in the southern half of South Vietnam are supervised, in turn, by the COSVN Propaganda and Training Section, which employs several hundred people. The province section supervises the Propaganda and Training Sections of the lower levels.

179. The Propaganda and Training Section cooperates with the Civilian Proselyting/National Liberation Front apparatus, with the Military Proselyting Section, and with the Political Struggle Section by providing them with guidance on propaganda. Liberation Radio, run by the COSVN Propaganda and Training Section, sometimes broadcasts overall directives concerning the section's clients.

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180. The organization of provincial Propaganda and Training Sections is by no means uniform. Nevertheless, several main components exist in most. A representative provincial section is always headed by a leadership committee. It might include Administrative, Propaganda, Training, Education, Printing, and Entertainment Subsections. Some sections also run a Party school.

181. The Administrative Subsection handles the leadership committee's administrative chores. The subsection is manned by a finance cadre and some typists, couriers, and guards.

182. The Propaganda Subsection devises propaganda and disseminates it throughout the province. Its basic sources of propaganda are the Liberation News Agency (LNA) and Liberation Radio, both run from the COSVN Propaganda and Training Section.

183. The LNA is a news service, similar in function to the Associated Press or Reuters. It has its own two-way radio network. Messages passed from lower to higher levels include tales of local atrocities allegedly committed by the Allies, accounts of Viet Cong military exploits, attitudes of the people, and information on such subjects as the VC school system and civil health matters. Messages from higher to lower levels include guidance on propaganda, requests for certain types of stories, and notifications of higher level training courses.

184. A province-level Propaganda Subsection has several components:

a. A reporting component, whose correspondents cover local news.

b. A production component, which writes copy and prepares propaganda. (Some provinces have their own newspapers.)

c. A photography component, with news photographers and dark rooms.

d. A radio component, which maintains two-way communications with Liberation News.

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Provincial Propaganda Subsections have also occasionally fielded armed propaganda teams.

185. The Training Subsection trains lower level workers in education, entertainment, and propaganda techniques. Students attending courses run by the subsection include rank-and-file workers at province and district levels as well as cadres from the villages and hamlets.

186. The Education Subsection runs the provincial school system. Some Province Education Subsections run small schools directly, but mostly they supervise those run by the districts and villages. Villages and hamlets run elementary schools. Viet Cong elementary school graduates know how to read and write -- although not always well -- and have had large doses of ideology.

187. The Printing Subsection prints leaflets, bulletins, newspapers, and layout work for Entertainment and Propaganda Subsections. It has an office chief, typesetters, and printers.

188. The Entertainment Subsection supervises the arts in Viet Cong areas. Its roving troupes course the province, giving performances heavily larded with Party doctrine. Entertainment Subsections are said to include the following components:

a. A drama troupe, a dance troupe, and a small orchestra, each of which is on the road most of the time for one-night stands or somewhat longer engagements.*

b. A movie projection crew, including camera operators and "personnel in charge of generators."

189. The Party School is occasionally found at province level. Both probationary and full Party members attend it. They take courses in Communist theory and organization. There are also Party schools in North Vietnam and at COSVN. (The schools in both places are called "Nguyen Ai Quoc," an early alias for Ho Chi Minh.) Subjects covered at provincial Party schools include:

* At least one dance troupe made its way down the Ho Chi Minh Trail in the early 1960s. It has performed for COSVN.

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- a. How to run VC political organizations.
- b. Military and civilian proselyting techniques.
- c. Security affairs.
- d. "Political struggle" techniques.
- e. Ways to counter Allied pacification programs.

190. Propaganda and Training Sections maintain some covert cadres in GVN areas as "legals," with GVN documentation. Some of these propagandize the populace at large; others try to recruit people belonging to certain types of professions -- most often entertainers, teachers, and journalists. Some Viet Cong teachers have infiltrated GVN territory to get jobs within the GVN school system. Once inside, they try to indoctrinate students and fellow teachers.

Finance and Economy Section

191. The Finance and Economy Section is the basic Viet Cong economic organization. The Province Section collects taxes in the form of goods and money, manages bond sales, runs businesses and trade groups, supervises production of food and other material in VC areas, extends rural credit, and dispurses funds to other provincial organizations. The Province Section reports to the Province Current Affairs Committee, to which it submits an annual provincial budget for approval. The section is technically supervised by the Region Finance and Economy Section. Technical supervision extends thereafter to the COSVN Finance and Economy Section, which establishes broad economic policies and goals and prepares an overall annual budget for the COSVN Current Office Committee. It is unclear which organization in North Vietnam is responsible for overseeing financial affairs in the south. The Province Finance and Economy Section supervises subordinate sections and sets tax quotas for districts under its jurisdiction. The districts thereafter set quotas for the villages.

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192. The Finance and Economy Section works closely with the Forward Supply Council and the Rear Services Staff of the Province Unit Headquarters. Its Finance Subsection (see Paragraph 198) is in close touch with the finance component of the military Rear Services Staff and provides a large share of the provincial military budget. The section also keeps in touch with the province's other major agencies, providing them with funds and auditing their books. The Chief of the Finance and Economy Section frequently consults with the Province Party Secretary and often is a member of the provincial Current Affairs Committee.

193. The Finance and Economy Section in Viet Cong areas garners income from a number of sources, including:

- a. Taxes levied on agriculture, businesses, transportation, services, and income. Tax schedules vary considerably by locale and degree of Viet Cong control. Taxes are collected both in money and goods, especially rice.
- b. Fund drives to obtain gifts of money from persons in both Viet Cong and GVN-controlled areas.
- c. Bond sales carried out primarily in VC areas. Yields from the sales have dwindled and now make up only a small part of Viet Cong revenues.
- d. Profits from VC-run enterprises such as bakeries, blacksmith shops, farms, rice mills, saw mills, and salt mines.
- e. Exploitation of the black market in GVN territory by exchanging dollars, piasters, and Military Payment Certificates.
- f. Other revenues, including funds derived from the sale of postage stamps and interest on loans.

194. The Viet Cong finance structure also gets money from abroad. The funds are derived from direct grants in aid from Communist sources, including North Vietnam. Some money is physically

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transported into the south (over the Ho Chi Minh Trail, for example). Some is obtained by Viet Cong agents cashing checks in South Vietnam against banks abroad. Most money obtained from abroad is obtained by finance components subordinate to region level and above.

195. In VC areas, the GVN piaster is the usual means of exchange. There have been cases, however, of "Ho Chi Minh" money -- that is, old North Vietnamese currency -- being used by the Communists in certain areas. Until recently, there has been little evidence of the Viet Cong counterfeiting US or GVN currencies. Recently, however, counterfeit money has started turning up. So far, quantities have been small.

196. Headed by a leadership committee, a provincial Finance and Economy Section normally has Administrative, Finance, Farm Production, Trade, and Procurement Subsections.

197. The Administrative Subsection is charged with personnel and clerical matters, with security with the subsection's own financial affairs and with training. Finance training at province level is primarily for lower level accountants and clerks. Training for financial executives is carried out at the region and COSVN levels, or in North Vietnam.

198. The Finance Subsection prepares the budget for approval by the Province Current Affairs Committee. The subsection also collects and disburses funds and keeps detailed financial records on income and expenses. It supervises tax collections and bond drives, usually carried out by the lower echelons. Provincial Finance Subsections sometimes collect taxes in GVN areas (such as province capitals) and large market places in VC-controlled territory.

199. The Farm Production Subsection (sometimes called the Production Subsection) is responsible for all farming endeavors in Viet Cong territory. These include growing crops, reclaiming wastelands, and developing and improving local agriculture. In coastal provinces it oversees the management of fisheries. Part of its job is to allot acreage for various crops and to arrange for the extension of credit to farmers.

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200. The Trade Subsection takes care of all commercial activities of the Finance and Economy Section. It regulates the flow of goods in and out of Viet Cong areas and is responsible for their marketing.

201. The Procurement Subsection (where one exists) handles the purchase and storage of foods and other supplies. Procurement Subsection agents with GVN documentation often operate in government territory to buy goods scarce in Viet Cong areas.

The Forward Supply Council

202. Forward Supply Councils are charged with supplying the Communist Armies with porters, including civilian laborers and Assault Youths. The Councils were established from COSVN through village levels in early 1965 to prepare for a buildup of Communist forces and for an increase in large-unit warfare. Their membership includes representatives from the Army and from the Communists' Political/Administrative Sections. In the villages and hamlets, where most porters are actually recruited, the National Liberation Front is heavily represented on the Council. At province level, the Council reports directly to the provincial Current Affairs Committee. It coordinates its affairs with Forward Supply Councils of the higher and lower echelons.

203. From the outset, the Councils have encountered problems because their authority is not clearly defined. Bureaucratic infighting has been the result. Wearying of the disputes, COSVN decided to abolish the Councils in late 1967. Their functions, according to the COSVN directive calling for their abolition, were to be taken over by the Finance and Economic Section and Rear Services Staff of the Army. However, the COSVN directive failed to take hold in most areas, and Councils continued to exist. Bowing to the intransigence, COSVN changed its mind again in 1968 and issued a directive calling for the Councils' restoration. They are now functioning in most areas, with varying effectiveness. Because of policy decisions made in early 1969 shifting emphasis from large-unit to small-unit warfare, the Councils' importance has for the time being diminished. If large-scale warfare resumes, they will probably regain their former stature.

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204. The Councils work closely with the following organizations:

a. The Finance and Economy Section. For example, laborers recruited by Forward Supply Council carry food obtained by the Finance and Economy Section. (See paragraphs 191 through 211.)

b. The Rear Services Staff of the Province Unit. Council-recruited laborers and Assault Youths assist the Rear Services transport and medical units to carry supplies and evacuate the wounded. (See paragraphs 99-119.)

c. Various Civilian Proselyting National Liberation Front components. The Council depends on the Front to recruit laborers and Assault Youths.

205. The Council itself is a committee which meets only occasionally. One provincial Council included the province Party Secretary who served as Council chief; the deputy head of the Finance and Economy Section; the head of Province Unit Rear Services Staff; a representative from the province Civilian Proselyting Section; representatives from the Province's Youth, Women's and Farmers' organization; and representatives from the Security, Civil Health, and Propaganda and Training Sections.

206. The Council's directives are carried out by a number of permanent components. These include Food Procurement, Recruiting, Civilian Labor, and Assault Youth Components.

207. The Food Procurement Component is charged with getting food from stores at lower levels and transporting it to military operating units or to depots run by Army Rear Services command. At the lower levels, the component appears to be involved in requisition and purchasing. Such activities are also carried on by the Finance and Economy Section.

208. The Recruiting Component supervises the recruitment of civilian laborers, Assault Youths, and -- on occasion -- soldiers for the Communist Army.

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209. The Civilian Laborer Component supervises civilian laborers used by the Army's Rear Service components. There are three classes of civilian laborers.* Class "A" laborers, for long-term use in faraway places; Class "B" laborers, for one or two weeks' service at "the front" and Class "C" laborers for short-term service locally.

210. The Assault Youth Component is responsible for organizing and supervising Assault Youth units. Assault Youths, who were first recruited in 1965 after the creation of Forward Supply Councils, are essentially for front-line service. They differ from run-of-the-mill civilian laborers in that they are limited to certain ages (17-30), are organized into formal units, are frequently uniformed,** and are lightly armed. Those subordinate to district level and above usually serve full-time, those under the villages and hamlets serve part-time. In many areas, more than half the Assault Youths are women.

211. The Assault Youths are often used in battle to carry food and munitions and to evacuate the wounded. They are also thought of as a partly trained manpower pool for the Main and Local Forces, to which they are frequently transferred. Some provinces have their own Assault Youths companies. Although some groups of Assault Youths have infiltrated down the Ho Chi Minh Trail, most are locally recruited.

The Political Struggle Section

212. The Political Struggle Section coordinates the efforts of various agencies in inciting unrest in GVN areas. Such areas include cities (such as Da Nang), province capitals, and district seats. The Political Struggle section was created in mid-1965 to take advantage of what then seemed to be increasing stresses on the social and political fabric of South Vietnam. The Section helped

* Criteria for the classes vary widely.

** The uniform often includes an insignia on which is affixed the initials "TNXP," which stand for "Thanh Nien Xung Phong" usually translated as "Assault Youths."

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foment the Buddhist Struggle Movement of early 1966. Once the struggle started, the section exacerbated its effects. Not all provinces have Political Struggle sections. In those that do not, other bureaucracies perform the Section's duties.

213. Where it exists, the Political Struggle Section is small, usually with fewer than half a dozen permanent members. When large-scale disturbances are planned in GVN territory, however, the Section calls together cadres of other agencies to draw up overall plans. The summoned cadres normally include members of the Military Proselyting Section, the Propaganda and Training Section, and various elements of the Civilian Proselyting/NLF apparatus. The provinces' role in inciting disturbances is primarily supervisory. Most of the real action is carried out by "legal" cadres* and rank-and-file members of the lower echelons. In Viet Cong-run villages and hamlets the people are sometimes temporarily organized into so-called "Political Struggle Battalions." During times of unrest, Political Struggle cadres are supposed to lead these "battalions" into GVN territory to stir up trouble. (See paragraphs 299 through 301, concerning the village "struggle" organization.)

214. A province-level Political Struggle Section reports indicated that the section was involved in the following "struggles":

a. "Non-violent" struggles, which appeared to include the distribution of pamphlets and the incitement of "public disturbances in GVN areas."

b. "Direct confrontation" struggles, in which persons allegedly suffering damage at the hand of the GVN noisily demand payment.

c. "Free travel" struggles in which mobs demand free access to cities and suburbs, in defiance of GVN rules for population control, including those concerning ID cards.

* "Legal" cadres are meant to operate in GVN territory and carry "legal" GVN papers.

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d. "City people's" struggle, which include street demonstrations and "burglaries."

e. "Combined military and enemy proselyting" struggles aimed at promoting insubordination in GVN Army and Police ranks. (This last "struggle" is almost certainly executed under the supervision of cadres from the Military Proselyting bureaucracy.)

The Civilian Proselyting Section and the National Liberation Front

215. The National Liberation Front (NLF), created in 1960, is the principal mechanism used by the Party to marshall the support of the South Vietnamese people for Communist goals. The Civilian Proselyting apparatus is the Party agency charged with controlling the Front. The NLF has no separate existence of its own.

216. In fact, at district level and above, Party control is so pervasive that the NLF scarcely exists at all, except on paper. Although the NLF has national, region, province, and district committees, they rarely if ever meet and are primarily lists of names picked by the Party to attract popular support.* There is no NLF chain of command above village level; the higher echelon NLF committees neither send directives nor receive reports. The only documents normally issued under their letterhead in South Vietnam are announcements of awards and medals.**

217. At the higher levels (district and above) the Party Civilian Proselyting bureaucracies do all the real work. Although these higher echelon agencies run certain kinds of proselyting operations -- mostly aimed at specialized targets --

* For example, the NLF "chairman" is Nguyen Huu Tho, a well-known but not particularly significant personage. One of the NLF's "vice-chairmen," Vo Chi Cong, is far more important. He was once reported as head of COSVN's Civilian Proselyting Section, which controls the NLF.

** For example, liberation medals, and "Brave Killer of American" awards.

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their main job is to oversee the civilian proselyt-
ing efforts of the Communist cadres who run the
NLF in the villages and hamlets. Thus the district
and higher bureaucrats administrate a command pyra-
mid whose operating base is in the countryside.

218. In the villages and hamlets, the NLF is
real. It consists there of a number of so-called
"Liberation Associations," to which a variety of
people belong. The largest are the Peasants,
Youths, and Women's Associations. There are
several smaller associations besides, some real
and some paper. The countryside membership of the
NLF Association reaches into the hundreds of
thousands. NLF members in Viet Cong territory are
overt and "illegal"; those in GVN areas are covert
and "legal."

219. Because there are usually so few Party
members in any single village or hamlet, it is
frequently the case that a formal Civilian Proselyt-
ing bureaucracy at these levels is nonexistent.
In that case, low-level Party officials run the
NLF directly. Thus a hamlet Party Chapter Secre-
tary might also be the head of the local NLF Pea-
sant's Association. And the Secretary's deputy
might run the NLF Youth Association. In both
examples, of course, the cadre's Party position is
far more important than his NLF one.

220. As noted above, the NLF at province level
is mostly paper, and the Party Civilian Proselyting
apparatus does the work. A provincial Civilian
Proselyting apparatus is customarily organized in
one of two ways:

a. Either there is a Civilian Pro-
selyting Section, with subsections cor-
responding to the NLF's principal associa-
tion.

b. Or there is no Civilian Proselyting
Section, and the components have Section
status -- that is, there is a Peasants Sec-
tion, A Women's Section, etc. -- each
corresponding to an NLF Association.

221. Where a Civilian Proselyting Section exists,
as in Case a, above, its chief reports directly to

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the Current Affairs Committee. More often than not, the chief is also a Current Affairs Committee member, since civilian proselyting is near the top of the Viet Cong's list of priorities.*

222. Where at province level the civilian proselyting components have Section status (as in Case b, above), the Section heads report directly to the province Current Affairs Committee, and a Committee member is designated to coordinate the various proselyting sections. In some provinces, the Deputy Party Secretary is selected; in others, it is the Party Secretary himself.

223. In describing a provincial Civilian Proselyting apparatus, this handbook assumes the existence of a Civilian Proselyting Section, as in case a, above. If present, the Section is run by a leadership committee consisting of a chief, his deputy, and the heads of the subsections. A small staff supports the committee. The staff includes staff assistants, clerks, couriers, and guards. A typical Civilian Proselyting Section includes Peasants, Youth, and Women's Subsections. There are usually other subsections too, depending on local needs.

224. The Peasant's Subsection (also known as Farmer's Subsection) is charged with the administration -- through the districts -- of the NLF Peasant's Associations in the villages and hamlets. These Associations perform such tasks as recruitment -- both for the army and for "political struggle battalions" -- farm production and farm management, the dissemination of propaganda, military proselyting, and tax collection. The Associations maintain large members of covert cells in GVN areas. These cells are usually run from the villages. The village Peasant's Association is discussed in paragraphs 302-306.

225. The Women's Subsection administers the NLF Women's Associations in the villages and hamlets. (Again, the administration filters through the districts.) At the village and hamlet levels, the

* *The present chief of the COSVN Civilian Proselyting Section is also on COSVN's Party Current Affairs Committee.*

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Associations concern themselves with such matters as midwifery, pamphlet passing, political agitation, and the succour of wounded. They are particularly active in the field of military proselyting. In some provinces, province-level Women's Subsections run agents into the province capital, especially where large numbers of women congregate, such as the central market place. See paragraph 298 through 300 for a more detailed discussion of the Women's Association at village level.

226. The Youth Subsection, through its district subordinate, administers the NLF Youth Associations in the villages and hamlets. More than any other organization, the Youth Association is concerned with recruitment. It is closely associated with the NLF Student Association. (In some areas, the local association is called "Youth and Students.") Together, they try to penetrate the GVN school system. They are particularly active in attempting to gain control of various South Vietnamese student groups in GVN territory. Village Liberation Youth Associations are discussed in paragraphs 311 through 312.

227. Other components run by the Communist Civilian Proselyting bureaucracy are numerous and complex. The Viet Cong have formed a proselyting component for virtually every organized group in GVN society. Active proselyting components include elements directed at Catholics, Buddhists (both "moderate" and "militant"), Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, Khmers, Chams, Chinese, various Montagnard tribes, refugees, intellectuals, merchants, various types of laborers, and veterans.

Other Sections

228. The sections already listed are found in most provinces. Somewhat rarer sections include War Invalid Sections, Mobilization Committees, Food Production Sections, and Government Sections. The list is by no means complete.

229. War Invalid Sections are increasingly common. They were created to mobilize the energies of the large numbers of disabled war veterans in VC territory. Whether cadres from War Invalid Sections have anything to do with mobilizing protests by disabled war veterans in GVN territory is unclear.

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230. Mobilization Committees are designed to orchestrate the efforts of the Political/Administrative and Military Bureaucracies at local recruiting. The Committees appear to have few, if any, integral cadres and meet only from time to time. Committee members may include representatives from the Civilian Labor and Recruiting components of the Forward Supply Council, from the Propaganda and Training and Security Section, from the Province Unit Headquarters, and from Peasant's, Women's, and Youth organizations. Province Mobilization Committees are rare. Districts and villages are more likely to have them, particularly in the northern half of South Vietnam.

231. Food Production Sections grow rice and tend cattle in VC base areas in order to make Communist rear areas as self-sufficient as possible. Where they exist, they are manned by the lame, the suspect, and the disgruntled.

232. Government Sections have been created in some provinces to put under one bureaucratic roof all the machinery of the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG). To date, the Viet Cong have assigned only a few cadres to such sections, which are still skeletal. If the Viet Cong ever seriously bring alive the PRG -- say, in the event of a ceasefire -- its structure will be greatly expanded.

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V. The Lower Echelons

Background

233. There are normally three layers of command below the province: districts, villages, and hamlets. The province capital, which is also subordinate to the province, is the organizational equal of a district.

234. In some areas, the Viet Cong have other echelons. In VC My Tho Province, for example, there are "intervillages," consisting of two or more villages -- they are an intermediate echelon between the district and the village, where "interhamlets" occasionally exist. The latter are made up of two or more hamlets, functioning as an echelon between the village and the hamlet.

The District

235. There are 244 Viet Cong districts in Communist territory. Most are subordinate to the 33 Viet Cong provinces; some to the five subregions around Saigon. Each province has from three to eleven subordinate districts. The Party Secretary, who is the district's most important official, presides over the District Current Affairs Committee. He usually reports to province headquarters once a month for consultation.

236. The structure of a district organization is similar to that of a province, although it is smaller and less complicated. Just as a district is considered organizationally an integral part of a province, the district sections are closely connected to their provincial seniors. Thus the District Security chief reports not only to the District Current Affairs Committee, but also to the province Security Section.

237. The District Party Current Affairs Committee -- which consists of the Party Secretary, his deputy, and as many as half a dozen other Party officials -- usually has a small office staff, including a few guards, clerks, and couriers. It is the district equivalent of the

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Provincial Administrative Office. The Current Affairs Committee controls the District Unit and several sections, usually the same as those at province level.

238. The District Unit is run by a headquarters containing Military, Political, and Rear Services Staffs. It also controls the Post Office and a number of small combat formations.

239. The largest combat unit at district level is an infantry company, which includes three rifle platoons usually equipped with automatic and semi-automatic weapons. The majority of these forces are probably ex-guerrillas. About a third are Party members, and another third belong to the Party Young Group. The company seldom leaves the district. Typically, it conducts attacks against GVN outposts, sometimes with the local guerrillas. Often, a district unit also has a sapper platoon, a heavy weapons platoon, and a small number of engineers, scouts, and "special action" soldiers used as assassins.

240. The District Military Staff is organized as its provincial counterpart. The operations component plans attacks and local strategy, the military intelligence component recruits spies in the district seat and supervises the village-run "People's Intelligence" informant nets, and the militia component keeps administrative track of the Village, Hamlet, and Secret Guerrillas. The staff also sometimes runs small infantry training schools for Guerrillas and Self-Defense Militiamen.

241. The District Political Staff seldom numbers more than half a dozen and sometimes consists of a single person. Its chief is in close touch with the District Party Secretary. The staff ensures that the district soldiers are familiar with the latest Communist political edicts.

242. The District Rear Service Staff is the largest of the three staffs. An ordnance component maintains small depots, and sometimes little workshops for repair of weapons and production of mines, grenades, and booby traps. The medical

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component runs small first aid stations and sometimes has a hut or two for ailing soldiers and guerrillas. Its transport component works closely with both district and village Forward Supply Councils -- which provide Assault Youths and Civilian Laborers -- and with the District Post Office, which is part of the nationwide postal system. The District Post Office resembles its province equivalent.

243. The district sections include the Organization, Civil Health, Security, Military Proselyting, Propaganda and Training, Finance and Economy, and Political Struggle Sections. Districts also have a Forward Supply Council and a Civilian Proselyting apparatus.

244. The District Organization Section consists of one or two Party cadres. They keep personnel records for the Party members belonging to the district and its villages.

245. The District Civil Health Section ordinarily maintains a dispensary, sends roving health workers to the villages and hamlets, and has a small pharmacy.

246. The District Security Section has three main parts: an administrative component, manned by couriers and clerks; an internal security and legal affairs component, to run counter-intelligence and security investigations and to keep public order in Viet Cong territory, and an espionage component that runs operations in GVN territory. District security targets include the local GVN police, security, and intelligence agencies; local political parties; religious groups; labor unions; and the district GVN administrative apparatus. Most district sections have now formed Armed Security elements that are organized into small military-type units, functioning as armed police. Although Viet Cong directives call for the fielding at district level of an Armed Security platoon, most districts have only mustered a squad or so.

247. The District Military Proselyting Section also has three main parts: a propaganda component

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that supervises propaganda campaigns aimed at RVNAF soldiers and their dependents; a Fifth Columnist component that runs low-level subversive penetrations in ARVN, the Regional and Popular Forces, and People's Self-Defense Force; and a detention component that has a small POW Camp for Allied prisoners. American prisoners, however, are seldom held in district camps. They usually go to provincial, region, or national-level camps.

248. The District Propaganda and Training Section includes education, entertainment, and propaganda components. The education apparatus supervises the primary schools in the villages and hamlets and occasionally runs district-level secondary schools. The propaganda component has a small printing facility, issues information bulletins and pamphlets, and conducts rallies supporting Viet Cong policy. The entertainment component has a small group of roving players.

249. The District Finance and Economy Section normally has three components: a finance component to supervise tax collections, a farm production component to oversee agricultural matters, and a trade component to supervise commercial transactions. Most tax collecting is done in the villages.

250. The District Forward Supply Council supervises the recruitment of civilian laborers and Assault Youths to support the operations either of the District Unit or of military units of the higher levels. The actual recruiting is done in the villages, often by the local NLF Associations.

251. The District Political Struggle Section coordinates the efforts of Viet Cong agencies in fomenting unrest in GVN-controlled territory. Among its tasks are the raising and fielding of "Political Struggle" units raised in the villages and hamlets.

252. The District Civilian Proselyting Section supervises the Front Associations of the villages and hamlets. It also runs a limited number of operations in the district seat.

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The Province Capital

253. Each province capital has its own separate organization. Like the districts, the capital's organization is subordinate to the province.* Large province capitals have subordinate precincts. A Viet Cong city precinct is on the same organizational level as a Viet Cong village in the countryside. Viet Cong precinct boundaries are often the same as those used by the GVN police.

254. The province capital structure is run by a Party Current Affairs Committee whose chief regularly reports to the Province headquarters. The Committee, which sits outside the city, usually in a relatively safe base area, controls a number of sections, frequently the same as those in the districts. The section headquarters are also located outside the city. Large numbers of couriers move between the city's Current Affairs Committee, the headquarters of the subordinate sections, and the Viet Cong cadres operating in the city itself. Captured city documents state that a safe and secure courier system is absolutely essential to a smoothly run urban apparatus. City couriers almost always carry "legal" documentation.

255. A Viet Cong province capital structure differs from a VC district structure by being almost completely covert. For reasons of security, the Viet Cong heavily compartmentalize their city structure. The normal operating component within a city is the cell. Thus a city cadre normally knows only a very few of his colleagues. Virtually the whole city structure is "legal" in that members possess legal GVN documentation.

256. The province capital has its own military command called the "City Unit." The City Unit

* The cities of Da Nang, Hue, Vung Tau, and Can Tho are subordinate to regions rather than provinces. Saigon is subordinate to COSVN. It is called Subregion 6. A discussion of the Saigon organization -- which is very complicated -- is beyond the purview of this Handbook.

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headquarters sits outside the capital and has small Military, Political, and Rear Service Staffs. City Units vary greatly in size. Some have only a few dozen soldiers; others have several hundred. As a rule, their combat troops stay outside the city, entering only for raids or reconnoitering. In big attacks, they sometimes act as guides or spearheads for larger combat formations. The high point of City Unit operations was in Tet 1968, when the urban areas were the Communists' principal target, requiring the commitment of virtually every City Unit.

257. Although City Units are conventionally structured, they tend to have certain types of soldiers, mainly sappers and commandos who are trained in demolition and street fighting. They are supposed to be thoroughly familiar with the city's layout, although this was not always the case during the Tet operations. Most city soldiers have false papers.

258. In cities with precincts, the precincts also have their own political and military organization. Precinct soldiers are called "city guerrillas," or "secret guerrillas." They live in the city, possess only light weapons, if any, and operate as individuals or in cells. Occasionally, they act as terrorists.

259. The Security and Military Proselyting Sections are among the most important of the province capital's political and administrative organization. The headquarters of the province capital Security Section, which like the City Unit headquarters is located in a Viet Cong base area outside the city, has three main types of operating cadres: "intelligence," "secret security" and armed reconnaissance. The "intelligence" cadres recruit spies in the Allied security and intelligence services and in GVN political and religious parties. One of their prime targets in the province capital is the ID card issuing office, from which they try to buy or steal legal papers. The "secret security" cadres compile blacklists. The armed reconnaissance cadres try to assassinate constables and politicians. The province capital Security Section cooperates closely with the Espionage Subsection of the Province Security Section.

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260. The Province Capital Military Proselyting Section also has an out-of-city headquarters. It attempts to recruit large numbers of women into cells to proselyte GVN soldiers and policemen stationed in the capital. The Section's Fifth Column component handles some of the agents; others are run by the three-women cells. English-speaking women assigned to the Military Proselyting apparatus sometimes frequent bars used by American servicemen. The Section works closely with the local NLF and with the Fifth Column Subsection of the provincial Military Proselyting Section.

261. The activities of the other urban sections vary widely. Cadres of the Propaganda and Training Section seek employment with local newspapers. Those of the Finance and Economy Section are active in the city's black market, where they buy and sell dollars and piasters, pass counterfeit bills, and buy goods scarce in Viet Cong territory.* Civil Health cadres purchase medical supplies and dispense remedies in the slums.

262. The NLF's urban Civilian Proselyting apparatus differs considerably from that found in the countryside. There are few Peasant Associations in the cities, but Labor Associations are common. So are organizations targeted at refugees. Viet Cong NLF operatives are most active in the poorer areas of the city where the people are more receptive to their blandishments and where police are relatively scarce. The NLF's urban organization tends to be cellular.

263. The "Alliance for National, Democratic, and Peace Forces" is a city organization paralleling the city components of the NLF. Sometimes described as the NLF's "urban sister," the Alliance was formed in April 1968, after the Tet offensive. Primarily aimed at intellectuals, merchants, students, and priests, it tended to be more elitist than the NLF. The Alliance has echoed the Viet Cong line at the Paris negotiations and says it supports the Provincial Revolutionary Government (PRG), of which it is a part. The establishment of the PRG was announced in June 1969. The Alliance has not been particularly successful and in most areas is either dead or dormant.

* One of the most popular items is the flash-light battery.

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264. The term "springboard" is frequently heard in connection with Communist urban operations. Run mostly by women, a springboard is used by the Communists as a place to lodge and feed transient cadres, as a temporary headquarters for fast-moving operations, as a letter drop, as a meeting place for "legal" and "illegal" operatives, and as a refuge for cadres in trouble. Most "springboards" are located in disputed areas, where neither the Viet Cong nor the GVN hold total sway. A springboard may be a house, a patch of woods, or a tunnel, depending on what is available.

Villages and Hamlets

265. The 244 Viet Cong districts are divided into some 2,500 villages. Certain districts have over 20 villages, others fewer than six. The villages, in turn, are split up into hamlets. The number of hamlets in South Vietnam is unknown, but most observers put the figure at about 14,000.

266. The Viet Cong have cadres in virtually all of the villages and most of the hamlets. In some villages, only a few cadres serve inactive or in hiding. In others, several hundred people actively help the Communists. The disparity in numbers leads to a diversity in organization. It is hard to generalize about the organization of a Viet Cong village and harder still to generalize about a hamlet. In many areas, the two echelons are combined.

267. The Village Party Secretary heads the village organization. He and a few subordinate Party cadres constitute the small governing bureaucracy at the Viet Cong grass-roots level. The Secretary usually lives in the safest hamlet in the village. If the village has no safe hamlets, he may stay in a small village base area. In any case, he moves frequently, checking up on subordinates, consulting with district officials, attending meetings, and generally overseeing village affairs. The Secretary usually has a deputy, who often is chief of the local NLF organization. The Secretary sometimes travels alone and sometimes with a guard or courier.

268. Village organizations are normally so small that leading cadres often hold more than one job. For example, he might be a guerrilla, a

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tax collector, and the head of an NLF Association, all at the same time.

269. The Village Unit is the village's military organization. It is run by a Military Affairs chief. He reports both to the Village Party Secretary and to the District military headquarters.

270. If well developed, a Village Unit has a small headquarters, including the chief, a courier or two, a medic, and a guard. Its combat arm is a formation of Village Guerrillas, ideally a platoon, but more often a squad or two. They serve full-time and are usually well armed. Most have rifles, and a few have automatic weapons. The Village Guerrillas seldom leave their assigned village. They mount small-scale attacks, scout, snipe, ambush, or harrass local GVN security units; pass out pamphlets; and help collect taxes. Larger village units also have a sapper cell.

271. Some villages have small workshops which repair rifles, reload cartridges, manufacture grenades, or prepare primitive booby traps. The Village Unit also runs the so-called "People's Intelligence" informant network, which consists of part-time informants, many recruited by the NLF. This network is the lowest rung of the Viet Cong's countrywide military intelligence ladder. The highest rung is the headquarters of the *Cuc Nghien Cuu* (Research Agency), located in Hanoi.

272. A Village Unit has subordinate Hamlet Units. In Viet Cong territory, a Hamlet Unit might consist of a reinforced squad of Hamlet Guerrillas and a squad or two of Self-Defense Militia. The Hamlet Guerrillas serve part-time. Perhaps half are armed.* The Self-Defense Militiamen are also part-timers. They seldom fight, but dig trenches, stand guard, carry supplies, and plant booby traps and punji sticks.** A Self-Defense

* Armament varies by locale. Near Allied bases, Hamlet Guerrillas are often heavily armed, even with submachineguns. Deep in VC territory, Hamlet Guerrillas have few modern weapons.

** Punji sticks are pieces of sharpened bamboo with points hardened by fire.

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Militia outfit may possess only a single rifle which is passed to whoever has the duty. Hamlet Units seldom leave their hamlets. Their main role is defensive, their main weapon, the booby trap. Both the Hamlet Guerrillas and Self-Defense Militia have a high percentage of women, old people, and youngsters.

273. In GVN-controlled and disputed areas, hamlet-level soldiers are called "Secret Guerrillas." They operate individually or in cells. Their arms, if any, are easily hidden: grenades, daggers, and pistols. Some Secret Self-Defense Militiamen also serve in GVN hamlets. They specialize in low-level intelligence. Both the Secret Guerrillas and Secret Self-Defense Militiamen are controlled directly from the Village Unit headquarters. As GVN territory has expanded in recent years, Secret Guerrillas and Militiamen have become increasingly common. In some areas, Secret Guerrillas outnumber Village and Hamlet Guerrillas combined.

274. "Upgrading" is a term often heard in connection with guerrillas. Promising militiamen are "upgraded" (transferred) to the Hamlet Guerrillas, Hamlet Guerrillas to the Village Guerrillas, and Village Guerrillas to the higher echelons. Upgrading is one of the main sources of manpower for the Communists' Main and Local Forces.

275. The Village Security apparatus is run by a security chief. He reports to the Village Party Secretary and to the district Security Section. In a strong Viet Cong village, he might have as many as half a dozen subordinates. They run investigations, make arrests, and set up security informant nets. Informants in GVN territory prepare blacklists and finger victims for assassination and arrest. The network is called "People's Security."

276. The main job of the full-time security apparatus in villages and hamlets is population control. Security cadres are supposed to know the political sympathies of each village inhabitant. Lists are kept of those believed to be hostile to the revolution. Sometimes the lists are contained in notebooks labelled "A," "B," and "C."

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"A" category notebooks contain the names of the most suspect; "B" and "C" notebooks, of people less so.

277. Hamlets seldom have more than one full-time security cadre who reports directly to the village security chief. His task is to strengthen the "People's Security" system, to which virtually everyone in a Viet Cong hamlet belongs, either wittingly or unwittingly. Frequently, he works through the Associations of the NLF, which often have their own security reporting channel.

278. Village Security cadres also try to recruit agents within the GVN structure. The most likely targets are GVN village policemen. GVN Revolutionary Department cadres, People's Self-Defense Force members, village- and hamlet-level officials -- particularly those in the GVN councils -- and Buddhist monks and Catholic priests are also candidates for recruitment.

279. The Village Military Proselyting organization's leading cadre reports directly to the Village Party Secretary. The cadre is administered from the District Military Proselyting Section, with which he is frequently in touch. Since the organization's major targets are GVN soldiers and police, its most important business takes place in government-controlled or contested hamlets. Targets include members of the Regional, Popular, and People's Self-Defense Forces, local GVN policemen, and other GVN officials. Sometimes the approach is direct; more often, the contact is indirect through the targets' relatives or friends. Military proselyting training manuals state that women -- ideally mothers and wives -- make the best proselytors. Thus the military proselytors often work through the local NLF Women's Association.

280. At best, the proselytors hope to recruit active agents. When first recruited, a military proselyting agent is designated a "Sympathizer;" after he proves himself he is called a "Fifth Columnist." Military proselyting agents are assigned many tasks, which range from propaganda to assassination. Captured documents record

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many instances of village military proselyting agents stealing rifles and ammunition, giving the Viet Cong morning reports or intelligence sketches, opening gates of posts about to be attacked, and sabotaging jeeps or other pieces of equipment. The agents also encourage GVN soldiers and policemen to desert or defect.

281. Besides recruiting agents in-place, the Viet Cong proselytors also attempt to penetrate the GVN. Some penetration agents join the GVN after their false defection in the local Chieu Hoi center. Others become "refugees" and enlist through regular channels.

282. As might be expected, large numbers of military proselytors live in GVN hamlets in "legal" status. The "legals," mostly women, include keepers of safe-houses, couriers, propagandists, and agent spotters.

283. The Village Finance and Economy organization's main duty is to collect taxes. Its chief reports directly to the Village Party Secretary and is supervised by the District Finance and Economy Section, to which he sends periodic financial statements. Taxes are collected in cash or kind, mostly rice. The rice is either sold to local merchants for profit or forwarded to depots for Viet Cong consumption. The Viet Cong gather taxes in both their own and GVN territory. Revenue from GVN and contested hamlets is collected furtively, often at night, by cadres carrying "legal" documentation. Village Finance and Economy cadres maintain elaborate bookkeeping records. Some money goes to district coffers. The higher echelons decide who gets how much.

284. In Viet Cong villages and hamlets, the Finance and Economy apparatus often determines what the farmers are to plant. In some areas, the apparatus parcels out seeds. In others, it runs small businesses such as bicycle shops.

285. The Village Forward Supply Council's main job is to recruit civilian laborers and Assault Youths for work locally on with the higher echelons. The Council Chief reports both to the Village Party Secretary and to the District Forward

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Supply Council. Sometimes the Village Party Secretary himself heads the Council.

286. The Council, which meets occasionally, includes representatives from the larger local organizations, especially the NLF Women's, Peasant's and Youth Associations. The Associations do most of the actual recruiting of workers. The Council also concerns itself with economic matters. Since its workers haul rice from place to place, the Council is in close touch with local tax collectors, who know where the rice is. The higher echelons often levy quotas for civilian laborers and Assault Youths on the Village Councils. Such quotas are often unrealistic.

287. Forward Supply Councils are particularly active prior to operations in which the Communists need large amounts of food and munitions. Council-recruited laborers and Assault Youths carry supplies to caches near expected battlefields.

288. The Village Propaganda and Training apparatus varies greatly by locale. Its chief reports directly to the Village Party Secretary and receives guidance, propaganda materials, and technical advice from the District Propaganda and Training Section. In some villages, the apparatus is quite complex, in others very simple. Whereas some may employ several cadres with specialities and relatively elaborate equipment, such as mimeograph machines, others may have only a cadre or two armed with soapboxes and fistfuls of pamphlets. The propagandists convene "study sessions," in which they try to fit broad policy themes to local conditions and attempt to turn turgid prose of propaganda circulars into simple and direct language.

289. In Viet Cong areas the apparatus sometimes runs a primary school which employs several teachers who teach and propagandize. Textbooks are written and printed at the higher echelons. Some schoolbooks the Allies have captured in the south were originally published in the north under the auspices of the Ministry of Education in Hanoi. The Ministry has sent thousands of teachers down the Ho Chi Minh Trail, most of whom serve at the

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district level and above. Relatively few go to the villages, as most village teachers are southerners.

290. Propaganda and Training cadres with "legal" documentation try to persuade teachers in GVN schools to slant their lessons in favor of the Viet Cong. These cadres work closely with local NLF Youth and Students' Associations.

291. The Village Political Struggle organization seldom has a full-time cadre. Instead, it is an ad hoc structure that is most active during times of political stress for the government. Its purpose is to provoke disturbances in GVN territory, or to make them worse, if they are already under way. Membership includes representatives from the village technical sections and the mass associations of the NLF.

292. The Political Struggle mechanism is designed to exacerbate disturbance-prone incidents. Since the Communist structure in province capitals and district seats is often too weak to make much trouble alone (or perhaps unwilling to risk exposure), troublemakers may be brought in from surrounding villages. These are either cadres -- perhaps from the Propaganda and Training or Security organizations -- or ordinary villagers. The villagers are formed into "Political Struggle" Units, armed with banners, bull horns, clubs, and knives, and marched by the cadres into town as an organized crowd. Although many past demonstrations in the smaller cities of Vietnam have contained a high proportion of outsiders, Viet Cong cadres can only occasionally persuade villagers to face the GVN police.

293. The Village Liberation Peasant's Association (also known as Farmer's Association) is the largest and most important of the grass-roots NLF organizations. Its chief is almost always a Party member, who reports directly to the Village Party Secretary. His activities are overseen by cadres of the District Civilian Proselyting apparatus. Some villages have several Peasant Associations in the hamlets. In others, there is only one, which is run by a village cadre.

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294. Most farmers in Viet Cong areas belong to the Peasant Association. Its functions are myriad. In the military field, for example, its cadres exhort members to join the local Guerrilla/Militia or to enlist in the Main and Local Force. If they refuse or are unfit, members are asked to perform lesser tasks such as digging trenches, repairing weapons, planting booby traps, burrowing tunnels, carrying rice, or -- perhaps -- merely standing by the side of the road to count Allied trucks. The road watcher would be considered part of the Viet Cong "People's Intelligence" network, which is run by the Communist military intelligence organization.

295. The Association's propaganda tasks are also all-encompassing. The members are not only expected to attend "study sessions," but also are supposed to recruit others. They pass out pamphlets, join demonstrations -- perhaps as part of a "Political Struggle" unit -- or write letters to relatives in the GVN army. The letters -- always censored -- ask the relatives to desert, defect, or consider becoming a Viet Cong agent. The letter writing is a form of proselyting, which is administered by the military proselyting bureaucracies up the chain of command.

296. Farming is another function of the Association. Association officials -- after consulting village Finance and Economy cadres -- try to persuade farmers to plant their crops in accordance with Viet Cong needs. In some areas, expanded rice production is encouraged; in others, vegetable planting is emphasized for the profits that will accrue from sales in the GVN district seat.

297. The Viet Cong also try to recruit farmers in GVN areas to join the Association. Many do, some from conviction, others as a form of insurance. Association members in GVN territory are covert and are usually organized into cells that are run from the village. They are expected to propagandize for the Viet Cong, to provide intelligence, to help collect taxes, and to join such organizations as the "Secret Security" net, which draws up blacklists for the Communist secret police.

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298. The Village Liberation Women's Association is the female equivalent of the Peasant's Association. A woman, usually a Party member, heads the Association, reporting directly to the Village Party Secretary. Supervision comes from the Civilian Proselyting bureaucracy of the senior district. In some villages there are several Women's Associations, in others only one. The Women's Association does many of the same things as the Peasants' Association.

299. However, medicine and health also are concerns of the Association. The Viet Cong Civil Health Service often works through the Association at village level and trains most of its members as midwives, nurses, and nurses' aides. Association members frequently take in sick and wounded from the Viet Cong army. In some areas, separate Associations called "Foster Mothers" have been formed to help the wounded.

300. Probably the Association's deepest commitments are in the fields of proselyting and propaganda. Women's Associations often have special sections devoted to troop proselyting. A large proportion of the Association's covert cells in GVN territory are for this purpose.

301. The Village Liberation Youth Association aims at youths between the ages of 16 and 25. Actually, age limits are not taken too seriously, and in some areas Viet Cong organizations exist which take in children as young as ten. The head of the village's Youth Association reports directly to the Village Party Secretary, and is normally a member of either the Party or its Youth Group. Cadres of the district Civilian Proselyting apparatus supervise his activities.

302. The majority of youths living in areas still under Viet Cong control belong to a Liberation Youth Association. The Viet Cong view the Associations as spawning grounds for future Party members, as recruitment pools for their Army, and as a means to channel the energy of the young in the Communists' direction.

303. Virtually from the time of their entry, members are badgered and cajoled into joining the Viet Cong organizations -- particularly the

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Army, but also the Assault Youths* "People's Intelligence" and "People's Security" nets, or Political Struggle units. They are particularly adept at Political Struggle, which involves dashing about streets, throwing brickbats, and hooting at police.

304. The Association's most able and enthusiastic members are selected to join the Party Youth Group which also has age limits of from 16 to 25. The Youth Group is a stepping stone to the Party itself, which 18 year olds can join.

305. The Youth Association operates extensively in GVN territory where it maintains large numbers of covert cells. Some of its more dedicated members are used as bomb-throwers and assassins. Their actions are planned and administered by the regular Viet Cong agencies, such as the Security Section or the Army's Special Action cells. A large proportion of the terrorist incidents in GVN-controlled areas are the work of covert Youth Association members.

306. The Liberation Student's Association is closely related to the Youth Association. In some areas the two Associations are combined. The Liberation Students are even more likely than the Youths to operate in GVN territory, usually in urban areas. Since the rebellion's outset, both organizations have been aimed at students attending GVN schools. They attempt to set up cells among the students and try to dominate, or at least influence, existing student organizations. In times of unrest, the Viet Cong tend to be more successful in getting students to demonstrate than other groups of South Vietnamese citizens. Operations involving students in GVN areas are directed by the village, district, province capital, and province echelons.

Liberation Committees

307. After the 1968 Tet offensive, the Viet Cong -- apparently thinking that a coalition

* *Assault Youths are young service troops, organized into units for carrying supplies and stretchers at the front.*

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government with the GVN was then a distinct possibility -- began creating so-called "Liberation Committees," and "Liberation Councils"* at the village level. The village "Councils" were "elected," and consisted of from 15 to 35 members. The smaller Committees were supposed to be the Council's standing bodies. By mid-1969 the Viet Cong claimed that some 1,800 villages had such organizations.

308. The announced purpose of both the Councils and Committees was to carry on the day-to-day administration of villages and hamlets. The Communists' reason for crediting them was to conceal the Viet Cong's role in governing the countryside. The new organizations were meant to display the trappings of a "legitimate" local government and lay the foundation for the formation of the national Provisional Revolutionary government.

309. Publicity concerning "elections" accompanied their creation. Indeed, captured documents and POW reports recorded the attendance of "delegates" at "conventions." In fact, the structure and organization of the Viet Cong apparatus at village level underwent only minor revisions. Even where the Committees and Councils actually existed, the Communist Party maintained the real power and occupied the key posts within the new structure.

310. Village Liberation Committees were supposed to be organized as follows:

a. Chairman and vice chairmen, in charge of finance and economy and military affairs. (One or both required to be Party members).

b. A secretary in charge of administrative affairs.

c. A member in charge of security (required to be a Party member).

* Sometimes called "People's Liberation Councils," or "People's Revolutionary Councils."

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d. A member in charge of information, education, and cultural affairs.

e. A member in charge of finance (required to be a Party member).

f. A member in charge of war invalids, social welfare, and civil affairs.

311. At present, the Councils and Committees operate in only a very few areas, having for the most part become inactive or defunct. In the event of a ceasefire or a coalition government, however, they are likely to reemerge, almost certainly as the grass roots echelon of the Communists' "Provisional Revolutionary Government," announced in June 1969.

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